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NELSON'S STUDIES IN MODERN HISTORY

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The End of Isolation

The End of Isolation

British Foreign Policy
1900-1907

by
GEORGE W. MONGER

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Contents

1	Splendid Isolation	1
2	The Approach to Germany, November 1900–June 1901	21
3	The Japanese Alliance, 1901–1902	46
4	British Diplomacy in 1902	67
5	C.I.D. and Foreign Office: Currents of Thought	93
6	1903 and the Turn to France and Russia	104
7	The Russo-Japanese War, December 1903–March 1905	147
8	The Moroccan Crisis, April–December 1905	186
9	The Anglo-French Military Conversations	236
10	The Liberals and Algeciras	257
11	The Russian Entente, 1906–1907	281
12	Relations with France and Germany, 1906–1907	296
	Bibliography	332

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April 1963

G. W. Monger

1

Splendid Isolation

1

The nineteenth century had been the age of the 'pax Britannica'. During the long Victorian peace, Britain, secure in her economic strength and her rule of the seas, had built herself the largest empire in the world. It was the apogee of her power. She had no need of allies; and isolation, which had at first been partially imposed upon her by events, was soon accepted as a sign of her strength and self-sufficiency. Glorified as 'Splendid Isolation' it became the guiding principle of her policy.

Circumstances had, however, been especially favourable. Even at its greatest British power had depended upon the unwillingness and inability of the European nations, preoccupied in the affairs of the Continent, to challenge her effectively overseas. When, towards the end of the century, this condition ceased to hold, Britain ceased to enjoy unchallenged supremacy. Two events in the last decade of the century precipitated a change: the Franco-Russian Alliance of 1894, which united her two most formidable adversaries; and, partly as a result of the stalemate produced in Europe by this Alliance, a sudden enthusiasm by all the Great Powers for imperial and naval expansion. Britain was everywhere faced by new rivalries, new pressures which she had never known before.

In the Eastern Mediterranean, for example, a new, and unfavourable, balance of forces had been established. Britain's traditional rôle in this part of the world had been to act as the protector of the Turkish Empire and so preserve the Straits from Russian control; but since Disraeli's classic exposition of this policy in 1878 the situation had been transformed by the Franco-Russian Alliance. The combined fleets of these two Powers would be too strong for the British Mediterranean Fleet; the Admiralty even decided that

it could not try to prevent their junction in case it failed and was then caught by superior numbers.[1] The British Navy had lost undisputed command of the Mediterranean. From this fact all else flowed. Custance, the Director of Naval Intelligence, was merely repeating what had long been decided when in March 1901 he stated that 'Great Britain alone, with France actively hostile or even doubtful cannot at the present time prevent a Russian occupation of Constantinople and the Dardanelles'.[2] In any case, there had, since 1878, been increasing doubt about the wisdom, as well as the possibility, of maintaining the Ottoman Empire against Russia. Custance himself thought that British communications with India would be threatened not by Russia's occupation of the Straits but by her Black Sea Fleet; and this fleet would, in fact, be easier to engage when it had passed into the Mediterranean.[3] But the old policy had not been definitely abandoned, even though the underlying strategic realities had changed. There was still the possibility of help from Austria and Italy, Britain's partners in the Mediterranean entente of 1887, and Custance was still ready to take part in a large scheme of operations with those Powers who were, he thought, 'more interested than we are in preventing a Russian occupation of Constantinople'.[4] In January 1902 Lansdowne repeated that Britain's reaction to a Russian attack on Constantinople should depend mainly on the attitude of Austria.[5] A policy which now depended so much on Austrian support rested, however, on precarious foundations. And Austria could in fact be relied upon less than ever: the 1887 Mediterranean Agreements had been allowed to lapse, and in 1897 she and Russia had agreed to follow a joint policy in Macedonia, the other area of Balkan discord.

In the Western Mediterranean, too, there had been important changes. In 1894 the last strong Sultan of Morocco had died, and during the minority of his successor the country had slipped into anarchy. The British, here as elsewhere, had always tried to preserve the native state against encroachment by their competitors, but in Morocco, surrounded on all sides by French territory, this had never been easy; now it became more difficult than ever. In

[1] Memo by Selborne, 17 Jan. 1901. Selborne Memoranda.
[2] Memo by D.N.I., 21 March 1901. Adm. 116/866B.
[3] Ibid. [4] Ibid. [5] See p. 85.

1900 the French took advantage of British preoccupation with the Boer War to occupy some strategically important areas long in dispute between Algeria and Morocco, and generally increased their pressure on the country. Delcassé, their Foreign Minister, accompanied this military advance by a diplomatic campaign which in December 1900 succeeded in buying the acquiescence of Italy, another interested Power, by accepting her schemes to absorb Tripoli.

British concern stemmed mainly from the proximity of Morocco to Gibraltar, a point of vital strategic importance to the Empire. A Moroccan harbour in the possession of a strong naval Power would threaten Gibraltar and further undermine Britain's already weakened Mediterranean position. A similar danger came from the Spanish, who, antagonised by what they regarded as British betrayal during their war with the United States in 1898, were working intermittently for a *rapprochement* between France, Germany, and Russia. Gibraltar was extremely vulnerable to attack from the land side: in 1901 Custance estimated that it would need 10,000 men to defend it if Spain were hostile,[1] and in 1907 the Admiralty actually decided that the base would be useless in war with Spain.[2] Spain was also important because the use of her ports would greatly reduce the problem of uniting the French squadrons from Brest and Toulon,[3] and because she too was an interested Power in Morocco. Yet at that time Spain was known to be unfriendly, and in March 1901 there was even a rumour that she was about to join the Franco-Russian Alliance.[4]

But, important as Mediterranean questions were, it was not upon them that British attention was at this time concentrated. The more pressing dangers seemed to come from Asia. The possibility of a Russian invasion of India, for example, had always been something of a bogy—the distances to be traversed were immense, the country difficult and the Afghans formidable—but towards the end of the century it suddenly became very real. Russian colonisation spread rapidly into Turkestan, and with it came the railway. The Russians had for some years had a line skirting the Persian-

[1] Comment by Custance, 2 Feb. 1901, on despatch from Fisher. Adm. 1/7516.
[2] Paper by Admiralty, 25 Feb. 1907. C.I.D. Records, Cab. 4/2, Paper 99B.
[3] Comment by Custance, 2 Feb. 1901, on despatch from Fisher. Adm. 1/7516.
[4] Durand to Lansdowne, 31 March 1901. F.O. Print (W. Europe), vol. 7776, No. 24.

Afghan frontiers, but since it was unconnected to their main system troops and supplies for the invasion of India would still have had to reach the frontier by road or across the Caspian. Now, however, Witte, their ambitious Finance Minister, was building between Orenburg and Tashkent a line which would establish direct communication between the frontier and European Russia. Although there were a few sceptics who still denied the reality of the Russian threat, the Orenburg-Tashkent railway, even before its completion in 1904, had a profound effect on British military thinking. In December 1902 an India Office Committee reported that 'the military position of Russia grows stronger every day and the completion of the Orenburg-Tashkent railway in or about 1905 will add immensely to the danger to which India may be exposed'.[1] After this preliminary finding, the line became one of the most important considerations in Balfour's great revaluation of imperial strategy in the light of the threat to India. If accepted as real, this threat raised a new and profound problem, for it meant that the British Empire was vulnerable in its greatest possession to an overland attack by a Great Power. For Britain, strong at sea but weak on land, this was an alarming possibility.

This was the background to the long-standing Anglo-Russian rivalry in Persia and Afghanistan. In both countries the Russians had recently had the better of the struggle. Persia presented the more acute problem, because, like Morocco, it was yearly growing weaker: in 1896 the vigorous Shah Nasir ed-Din had been assassinated and under his feeble successor Muzzafir ed-Din the country had grown ever more anarchic and the government ever more insolvent. The British, faced by growing Russian domination in the north, hesitated either to incur expense and heavy commitments by defending Persian independence or to abandon the Persians altogether and ensure their own interests in the south. Curzon, who went to India as Viceroy in 1898, was determined to end this irresolution and force the adoption of a definite policy. In a long despatch in 1899 he stressed the gravity of the situation, declared that north Persia must now be written off, and pleaded for coherence and consistency in policy 'while there is yet time'.[2] But this,

[1] Second report of Committee, 30 Dec. 1902. C.I.D. Records, Cab. 6/1, Paper 3.
[2] *British Documents on the Origins of the War 1898–1914*, ed. G. P. Gooch and H. Temperley, IV.319. Hereafter cited as B.D.

and many other representations by Curzon, had no immediate effect, and in 1900 there was a further sharp decline in British influence. In that year the Russians, profiting from British distractions in South Africa, made the ever-indigent Persian government a loan, one of the conditions of which was that it should not borrow any more money from external sources, other than Russian, for ten years. This disastrous loan contract seemed to establish Russia in the financial control of Persia. Salisbury saw this setback as typical of those which Britain would have to accept now that she was faced by powerful and ambitious rivals. Writing to Curzon in September 1901, he declared:

> Our chief interest in the East (after China) has been the movements of the Persian question. In the main it is a question of money. . . . In the last generation we did much what we liked in the East by force or threats: by squadrons and tall talk. But we have now 'allies'—French, German, Russian: and the day of free individual coercive action is almost passed by. For some years to come Eastern advance must largely depend on payment; and I fear that in that race England will seldom win.[1]

Nor was this all; for the military resources at Russia's disposal in Persia were also vastly superior. Lord George Hamilton, Salisbury's Secretary of State for India, was consistently gloomy about the disparity between the military strength of the two rivals in Persia. 'I do not believe', he told Curzon in 1899, 'our position in Persia or even on the Persian Gulf is such as would enable us successfully to have recourse to force to prevent the further advance of Russia.'[2]

Russia had also taken advantage of the Boer War to bring renewed pressure on Britain in Afghanistan. Since all Russo-Afghan relations, even of a purely local character, were forbidden, any Russian grievance had to be settled through London and Calcutta, and this arrangement became less easy to justify, or to enforce, as Russian commerce and population expanded across Turkestan. A Russian request in February 1900 for the opening of direct relations on the frontier to discuss purely local and non-political topics was, therefore, a shrewd political move.[3] The British generally recognised the weakness of their position. Curzon, of course, was vehe-

[1] Salisbury to Curzon, 23 Sept. 1901. Curzon MSS, Box 10.
[2] Ronaldshay, *The Life of Lord Curzon*, vol. ii, p. 100.
[3] B.D. I.376.

mently opposed to any surrender to Russian pressure; but both Hamilton, the political, and Godley, the permanent, head of the India Office thought that Britain would ultimately have to give way and hoped that this concession would be the foundation of a more durable Anglo-Russian understanding on Afghanistan.[1] Hamilton indeed hoped that such a settlement would include the partition of Afghanistan, for Britain, committed to the defence of the Afghans and yet without control over their policy, was in constant danger of being dragged by them into war with Russia. The Afghans, in spite of British obligations, were extremely jealous of their independence and resented any attempt to influence their policy: Balfour in 1902 wrote that relations between the two countries 'would be regarded as strained if they obtained during a brief interval of peace between two hereditary enemies'.[2] This was an impossible situation, and when he became Foreign Secretary Lansdowne decided that, on the death of the Ameer Abdurrahman, the arrangements between India and Afghanistan must be revised.[3] Even this was not the end of British troubles in Afghanistan. Afghan friendship, limited as it was, depended entirely upon the Amir, Abdurrahman, and he died in October 1901, leaving a successor, Habibullah, of whose intentions nothing was known.

But in 1900 the most urgent problems which Britain had to face arose in China. This great Empire, with a population of four hundred millions and untapped natural resources, was generally considered to be on the brink of dissolution. After defeat by Japan in 1894–5 had exposed its military weakness, the German seizure of Kiaouchou in 1897 had initiated what seemed to be a 'scramble for China'. Britain desired to maintain the Empire and with it the Open Door to trade, but China's own weakness and the ambitions of the Powers had forced her to retreat step by step from this policy. In 1898 she was, therefore, swept along in the rush for concessions as the Powers followed Germany's example. By 1900 each of them had a sphere of influence which, it was generally supposed, would become its share when the Empire finally broke up: Russia in Manchuria, Germany in Shantung, and France in the extreme south. As in Persia, Britain could not bring herself to

[1] Ronaldshay, op. cit., vol. ii, pp. 125–6.
[2] Memo by P.M., 16 Dec. 1902. C.I.D. Records, Cab. 6/1, Paper 5.
[3] Lansdowne to Salisbury, 7 July 1901. Salisbury MSS, Correspondence with Lansdowne.

abandon her old policy altogether, and laid only a half-hearted claim to the valley of the Yangtze as her sphere; even this brought her into conflict with the Germans. The whole position was made still worse by the unsuccessful Boxer rebellion of 1900. It left a double legacy: the need to extract compensation from China, a drain of resources which might complete her ruin; and, more important, the occupation of Manchuria by Russian troops, sent there on the pretext of suppressing disorders. Russian occupation of Manchuria raised the Chinese question in its most critical form yet, for it was the first time that a European Power had gone so far as to occupy a province of the Empire. Russia was moreover by far the most formidable of the rivals Britain had to face in the Far East. This was partly because, in the hunt for concessions, the Franco-Russian Alliance had proved itself an extremely efficient combination and partly because in China as in India Russia could bring her power to bear overland. Communications between European Russia and her Far Eastern provinces were still bad—the Trans-Siberian Railway was almost, but not quite, complete when war broke out in 1904—but, as a result of Witte's extensive railway programme, they were improving every year. The apparently inexorable advance of Russia across Asia, her slow realisation of her immense potentialities were to produce alarm, even dismay, in Britain. Selborne, who became First Lord of the Admiralty in 1900, was expressing a widely-held belief when he wrote that

> compared to our Empire, hers [Russia's] is invulnerable. We must be on the defensive in a contest because there is speaking generally and roughly no part of her territory where we can hit her. The expansion of her Empire does not involve her in the responsibilities which the expansion of ours does us—Her standard is much lower; her communications are secure; she has not even to keep one eye behind her—Defeat, diplomatic naval or military matters less to her than any other Power—absence of education, Parliament and press is not an unmixed evil—Consequently I would always much rather not quarrel with her if I could honourably or wisely avoid it.[1]

[1] Selborne to Curzon, 19 April 1901. Curzon MSS, 'Original letters' (Blue volumes) 1899–1901.

2

The need to resist all these new pressures had imposed a severe strain on Britain's resources. The strain on her finances was especially great, and had plunged Hicks Beach, the Gladstonian Chancellor of the Exchequer, into despair. In the autumn of 1901, in a quarrel with his service colleagues which nearly broke up the Cabinet, Hicks Beach asserted that expenditure had grown to a point where it threatened to bring about a revolution in financial policy. He pointed out that between 1895–6 and 1901–2 overall expenditure, excluding that arising from the Boer War, had risen from £105,000,000 to £147,000,000, an annual increase of £7,000,000, compared with one of £2,300,000 in the period 1889–95 and one of £711,000 in the period 1883–9. This was mainly because the Army estimates (again excluding the special costs of the war) had risen from eighteen to thirty millions, and those of the Navy from nineteen to thirty millions.[1] None of the Continental Powers had suffered such a great increase in defence spending. In 1904, Austen Chamberlain, Hicks Beach's successor at the Treasury, demonstrated that during the period 1893–1904 the increase of £19,000,000 in the British naval estimates had been greater than the increase in the combined estimates of Russia, Germany, and France, which had risen by seven and six millions, and one million. Britain had increased her Army estimates over the same period by twelve millions, again leading the other Great Powers, whose increases had been eleven millions for Russia, four for Germany, and two for France. The result was that overall British spending had risen faster than that of any other Great Power except the rapidly developing Russia. Neither Germany nor France had even approached the British rate of increase.[2]

A second memorandum by Hicks Beach in October 1901 argued that the extra expenditure thus incurred had almost absorbed the higher taxation levied to meet the cost of the war. But the rate of

[1] Memo by Hicks Beach, Sept. 1901. Chamberlain MSS, Box JC 14/4.

[2] Treasury memo of 18 Jan. 1904. A. Chamberlain MSS, Box AC 17, Package 59. The figures for overall spending were:
U.K. a rise of £51m (from £98m to £149m).
France a rise of £5m (from £138m to £143m).
Germany a rise of £28m (from £61m to £89m).
Russia a rise of £113m (from £106m to £219m).
U.S. a rise of £37m (from £96m to £133m).

British defence spending depended upon the programmes of the other Powers, and for this and other reasons there was no guarantee that expenditure would not rise still further. If it did it could only be met by an increase in the income tax or in indirect taxation. Of the first the Chancellor observed that 'it is undoubtedly a very serious matter that even if we were free from any extra charge for South Africa our ordinary expenditure would still require the continuance at a war rate [i.e. 1s 2d] in time of peace of a tax which has always been considered our great reserve in time of war'; and of the possibility of its being raised above the wartime level, he commented simply that 'it could not be borne'. Higher income tax, with all its social implications, would be forced upon the government as an ordinary source of revenue. On the other hand, the system of indirect taxation could not be substantially extended without the introduction of protection. Either expedient would mean a profound change in fiscal policy.[1] This was one of the greatest problems facing Edwardian England: a simultaneous increase in the cost of empire and in expenditure arising out of social legislation was imposing upon the revenue a burden which it could not bear without a radical extension of its scope. Hicks Beach himself shrank from such far-reaching changes and always opposed in the Cabinet any measures likely to lead to increased commitments or expenditure; in the autumn of 1901, during a dispute with the War Office and Admiralty, he very nearly resigned. He received the sympathy of Salisbury, who deplored the fact that 'we were in face of a Jingo hurricane and were driving before it under bare poles'[2]; but on such questions the two men were almost isolated inside the Cabinet.[3] Most of their colleagues regarded Hicks Beach's insistence on economy with impatience. Balfour, for example, regretted his retention in office after the reshuffle of 1900 because 'he will certainly go on dropping little grains of sand into the wheels of any departments in touch. If, as I fear, we have to spend large sums of money on army reorganization and naval construction I suppose he will describe our policy as Jingo and resign!'[4] Some ministers were even ready to accept the financial innovations which Hicks Beach dreaded. Selborne believed that

[1] Memo by Hicks Beach, Oct. 1901. J. Chamberlain MSS, Box JC 14/4.
[2] Lady V. Hicks Beach, *Life of Sir Michael Hicks Beach*, vol. ii, p. 153.
[3] Selborne to Curzon, 17 July 1902. Curzon MSS, Box S, Part 2.
[4] Balfour to Salisbury, 20 Oct. 1900. Salisbury MSS, Correspondence with Balfour.

money must somehow be found to support the Navy, since defeat at sea would be far more ruinous than any rise in taxation. 'It is impossible for me to believe', he told Chamberlain, 'that we are approaching the end of our resources.'[1] And of course Chamberlain himself was to become the advocate of the fiscal revolution which Hicks Beach so much feared.

But what really turned the difficulty into a crisis was the fact that, in spite of the immense sums spent, the margin of national safety remained as narrow as ever. In 1901 Brodrick, the War Secretary, told Chamberlain that the Army was nearly 50,000 men short and that if no steps were taken to overcome this deficit before Parliament met he would have to resign.[2] More important, however, was the position of the Navy, the real guarantee of British strength. It was little better. Selborne, who became First Lord in November 1900, showed his colleagues in January 1901 that, despite Goschen's great estimates, Britain had not increased, perhaps not even held, her lead over France and Russia. Since 1895–6 she had built 12 battleships and 37 cruisers, France and Russia 19 battleships and 20 cruisers. The result was that Britain now had 45 battleships in commission or reserve, the Dual Alliance 43; if building continued at its present rate and France and Russia completed their announced programmes, there would be an equality by 1906, each side possessing 53 battleships.[3]

The Two Power Standard was, therefore, just, but only just, being preserved; but the recent appearance of new naval Powers had seriously reduced its value. In 1889, when the Act establishing it was passed, Italy, with whom war was impossible, had been the greatest naval Power after France, and the Russian fleet had been negligible. The Standard was at once easy to attain and a guarantee of complete security when it was attained. But since then a novel preoccupation with imperial and naval power had inspired Russia, Germany, Japan, and the United States to embark on ambitious programmes of construction. The result of their exertions, which were then continuing at an increasing pace, was that already by 1901 Germany had 14 battleships, the United States 7, and Japan 5.[4] Two factors had combined to Britain's disadvantage: the Franco-

[1] Selborne to Chamberlain, 21 Sept. 1901. Chamberlain MSS, Box JC 11/6.
[2] Brodrick to Chamberlain, 10 Sept. 1901. Ibid., Box JC 11/1.
[3] Memo by Selborne, 17 Jan. 1901. Selborne Memoranda.
[4] E. L. Woodward, *Great Britain and the German Navy*, Appendix I.

Russian Alliance, which had converted the Two Power Standard from a convenient guide to construction to a harsh necessity of naval supremacy; and the growth of new Powers at sea to make this Standard, exacting as it was, a less efficient guarantee of safety.

Selborne concluded from these alarming facts that the character of the Two Power Standard must be completely changed. A memorandum of January 1901 explained his proposals to the Cabinet.

> Hitherto the policy of this country has been stated to be so to build battleships as to maintain an equality of numbers with the combined battleships of the two Powers possessing for the moment the largest fleets. It does not seem to me that this basis of calculation is one that will any longer serve, considering that within the last five years three new navies have sprung into existence—those of the United States, Germany and Japan. It is certain that it would be a hopeless task to attempt to achieve an equality with the three largest navies; but I go further and say that, if the United States continue their present naval policy and develop their navy as they are easily capable of developing it if they choose, it will be scarcely possible for us to raise our navy to a strength equal to that both of France and the United States combined. I propose therefore to consider our position almost exclusively from its relative strength to that of France and Russia combined and from that point of view it seems to me that what we should aim at is, not a numerical equality, but a strength drawn partly from numbers [and partly from superior organization].[1]

Selborne concluded by asking the Cabinet to approve these general principles and plans for construction based upon them. A further memorandum in November developed his arguments. He repeated that 'if we make such provision as will offer us the reasonable certainty of success in a war with France and Russia we shall have fully provided for all contingencies'; and he defended his choice of France and Russia by arguing that 'a naval war with France, or with France and Russia, is less improbable than any other naval war which we can foresee. . . . France practically exclusively, and Russia largely, frames her naval policy with a view to war with us'.[2]

[1] Memo of 17 Jan. 1901. Selborne Memoranda.
[2] Cabinet memo by Selborne, 16 Nov. 1901. Selborne Memoranda.

Naval questions were closely connected with financial, and because of difficulties with Hicks Beach, Selborne was unable to obtain the Cabinet's consent to a definite programme of naval expansion, laid down in advance on the Continental model. But the Admiralty itself based its policy on the principles he had set forth. They constituted a significant step away from isolation. Britain was to build against France and Russia alone, and to assume the friendship of Germany, Japan, and the United States. She was no longer to depend entirely on her own strength but was to rely on the forbearance of other Powers. Selborne himself was willing to go still further and give up isolation altogether. In December 1900 he wrote to Hicks Beach:

> [naval] expenditure will go on mounting up steadily. This outlook it is which I am quite sure must be a constant source of very grave anxiety to you. It would indeed be remarkable if it were otherwise—But as the question involved is for England life or death we must face this deplorable fact unless the Powers really agree to a general suspension of armaments which does not at present seem very probable—Otherwise I can see only one possible alternative and that is a formal alliance with Germany. I do not pretend to have examined this possibility in all its bearings —It may not be feasible or the price we should have to pay might be too high; all I can say now is that it seems to me the only alternative to an ever-increasing Navy and ever-increasing Navy estimates.[1]

All these difficulties were starting to converge towards the end of the century, and all were increased by the Boer War, which broke out in 1899. The disaster feared above all—a European coalition—did not materialise, but the embarrassment and distraction of the war did lead to a general weakening in Britain's military and diplomatic position. The expense of keeping a huge force in South Africa for so long—Brodrick estimated at one time that he had 315,000 men to maintain[2]—was partly responsible for the Cabinet crisis of 1901; and in the opinion of the War Office this accumulation of troops deprived Britain of the forces she would need to finish a war with France and Russia.[3] The military lessons of the war did in fact seem so alarming that a complete reorganisation of the Army was undertaken by the next two Conservative

[1] Selborne to Hicks Beach, 29 Dec. 1900. St Aldwyn MSS, Box PCC/83.
[2] Brodrick to Chamberlain, 18 Sept, 1901. Chamberlain MSS, Box JC 11/1.
[3] W.O. memo, 15 Aug. 1901. C.I.D. Records Cab. 3/1, Paper 1A.

Secretaries of State, Brodrick and Arnold-Forster. The war also produced diplomatic weakness and it was directly owing to the British preoccupation with the Boers that the French were able to make advances at their expense in Morocco and the Russians in Persia and Afghanistan. Goschen in September 1900 told Curzon that his 'earnest hope' was that 'we should have no complications there [Persia] *while we have the African business on hand*'; a serious break with France during a period of defeat in South Africa would, he added, be 'calamitous'[1]; Brodrick also warned Curzon against an energetic policy in the Persian Gulf while the war lasted.[2] According to Hamilton, Balfour believed in July 1901 that because of the war 'we were for all practical purposes at the present moment only a third-rate Power . . . with interests which are constantly conflicting with and crossing those of the Great Powers of Europe'.[3] This exposure of British weakness strengthened in their opinions those who already thought that Britain should cultivate closer relations with another Great Power. Hamilton, for example, believed in March 1901 that 'the locking-up of our troops in South Africa has so fettered our power of action that for some months to come we must lie low; unless we can establish a reliable alliance with some of the Great Powers'.[4] Lansdowne, who became Foreign Secretary, also thought that 'our South African entanglements make it impossible for us to commit ourselves to a policy which might involve us in war, unless we can assure ourselves that any obligation which we might incur would be shared by another Power'.[5]

Some elements are common to all the problems facing Britain at the turn of the century: the operation of the Dual Alliance, an extremely formidable combination, usually in practice working against Great Britain; the steady realisation of the immense potentialities of the Russian Empire, enabling her to bring her land power more effectively to bear in Central Asia and the Far East; the collapse of ancient non-European states like Morocco, Persia, and China and the appearance in their place of a power vacuum.

[1] Goschen to Curzon, 17 Sept. 1900. Curzon MSS, Blue volumes, 'Original Letters, 1899–1901'. Goschen's own underlining.
[2] Ronaldshay, *Lord Curzon*, vol. ii, p. 207.
[3] Hamilton to Curzon, 4 July 1901. Hamilton MSS, Letters to Curzon, vol. iii.
[4] Hamilton to Curzon, 15 March 1901. Ibid.
[5] Lansdowne to Lascelles, 18 March 1901. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xii.

But none of these would have been such a threat to the British Empire without the imperialist mood prevalent in Europe and America which drove not only France and Russia but also the 'Continental' Germany and the isolationist United States to become great imperial and naval Powers. Never before had all the Great Powers concentrated their attention so exclusively on imperial expansion, and never before had the British been confronted with such intensive competition in every part of the world. The foundation upon which the 'pax Britannica' had been built was now destroyed.

3

'Splendid Isolation' had been the rule of policy associated with the age of the 'pax Britannica', and it was natural that, as that age came to an end, the policy arising out of it should be increasingly challenged. It was the Far Eastern crisis above all that wrought the change, and by the late 1890's a powerful and growing section of the Cabinet, led by Joseph Chamberlain, had decided that Britain needed an ally in China. Chamberlain, impatient of tradition and diplomatic discretion, had declared publicly in 1898 that 'if the policy of isolation, which has hitherto been the policy of this country, is to be maintained in the future, then the fate of the Chinese Empire may be, probably will be, hereafter decided without reference to our wishes and in defiance of our interests'.[1] Since Britain found herself in tactical opposition to France and Russia, then, as Chamberlain declared in another speech in 1899, 'the natural alliance is between ourselves and the great German Empire'.[2] Britain had difficulties all over the world, but it was in China that they were most acute and it was over China that the battle over the future of British policy was fought. Chamberlain urged his view inside the Cabinet with great vigour and with increasing success; in 1898 he had even opened unofficial conversations with the German Ambassador, and, although these came to nothing, he persisted in his object. In 1900, after the Boxer uprising had made the situation still worse, Chamberlain circulated a memorandum arguing that Britain must work with Germany in China and that she must not allow the traditional principle of Chinese integrity to stand in her way.

[1] W. L. Langer, *The Diplomacy of Imperialism*, p. 508. [2] Ibid., p. 659.

I am personally unable to believe in the reform of the Chinese Empire as a whole or in the permanent maintenance of its territorial integrity. Unless Russia breaks up from internal difficulties, of which there is no present sign, I believe that she will ultimately secure North China and that the 'Open Door' will be a mere name as far as this part of the Chinese Empire is concerned. It is certain that we are not strong enough by ourselves to prevent her from accomplishing such an annexation, and both in China and elsewhere it is our interest that Germany should throw herself across the path of Russia. An alliance between Germany and Russia, entailing as it would the cooperation of France is the one thing we have to dread, and the clash of German and Russian interests whether in China or Asia Minor would be a guarantee of our safety.

I think then our policy clearly is to encourage good relations between ourselves and Germany, as well as between ourselves and Japan and the United States, and we should endeavour to make use of the present opportunity to emphasize the breach between Russia and Germany and Russia and Japan. We should then, without urging it, let it be known that we shall put no obstacle in the way of German expansion in Shantung, nor in the way of Japan's ambitions in Korea. But, in return, we should obtain written assurances recognizing our claim to predominant interest and influence in the Yangtze Valley. We are not likely ever to want to take possession of any territory in the interior ourselves; but we ought to try for some understanding which will keep off all others, and make it easy to maintain the 'Open Door' in at least this, the most important, portion of the Chinese Empire.[1]

Most of Chamberlain's colleagues were sympathetic; but all his attempts to force a change of policy met with the resistance of Salisbury, who was still both Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary. For some years Salisbury had been growing increasingly out of sympathy with what he regarded as Chamberlain's jingo policy and Chamberlain's impulsive, indiscreet, and ambitious temperament. He disliked the Boer War, the greatest triumph of Chamberlain's imperialistic policy. It was, he thought, a 'bad investment', which 'will about represent another penny on the Income Tax in perpetuity; or a little more'; but he added characteristically, 'if it has the effect of teaching our countrymen that they cannot have the moon whenever they cry for it, the money may not be altogether thrown away'.[2] This was only one example of the scep-

[1] Memo by Chamberlain 10 Sept. 1900. Chamberlain MSS, Box JC 14/4.
[2] Salisbury to Curzon, Aug. (no day) 1900. Curzon MSS, Box S, Part 2.

ticism with which Salisbury regarded the enthusiasms of his colleagues. His own view of foreign policy was quite different from Chamberlain's. He believed that radical measures were unnecessary because the Franco-Russian Alliance, which was responsible for so many of Britain's difficulties, lacked any real community of interest outside Europe. A letter to Curzon in 1899 explained his views at length.

> The Russian Government seems to me bent on projects where France cannot help her:—the Siberian railway, and outlet in the China sea: the impending disruption of the Austrian Empire and the chance of making the Slav elements in it Russian: the Dardanelles outlet and the chance of placing it at the command of the Russian government. These are things where France cannot greatly help Russia—and Russia has ceased to attach more than a formal value to the French Alliance. France has found this out; and recognizes that Russia is not keen to help her against England: and in fact is only certainly with her in one contingency—a war between France and Germany. This contingency becomes less likely as year after year passes by; and therefore the sympathy between Russia and France is visibly cooling. . . .
>
> I am disposed therefore to think that Russia's designs against England do not furnish so much as they did the key for deciphering the problem of modern politics: and that France sees no profit in acting as her instrument for that purpose. It follows that our policy is not to *presume* the hostility of the Government of France. But for many a long year we shall have to reckon with the illwill of all the minor Functionaries: every outbreak of the 'morbus consularis' will as a matter of tradition be directed against us. I fear, therefore, that anything like hearty good will between the two nations will not be possible. But I think a mutual temper of apathetic tolerance may be cultivated on both sides, without sacrificing the interests of either.[1]

As Foreign Secretary Salisbury was, therefore, determined to remain on good terms with France. But this required great skill and moderation. As he explained in 1900, 'a large part of the population—happily the smallest and weakest—wishes to go to war with us'. This party was normally outweighed by 'an influential section who are peaceful now but would join the war party under the influence of patriotic passion—which in France is a very strong emotion'; and it must therefore be the object of

[1] Salisbury to Curzon, 8 April 1899. Curzon MSS, Box 10.

British policy not to provoke this middle party.[1] This was not easy; Salisbury, with characteristic suspicion of parliamentary institutions, believed that 'the political attractions to them [French politicians] of a headlong policy are so great that you can never be certain that some French government will not yield to them, and authorize some step which will make war inevitable'[2]. In the present state of international affairs, therefore, relations with France offered at once the greatest danger and the greatest hope: the danger that capricious French public and parliamentary opinion would plunge Europe into war; and the hope that, if this could be avoided, a *rapprochement* between the two countries would ultimately be possible. An understanding with Germany, even if it could be attained, could have a disastrous effect on this delicate situation. In any case, Salisbury had no trust in the Germans. 'The one object of the German Emperor since he has been on the throne', he had written in 1898, 'has been to get us into a war with France.'[3] The Boxer crisis in 1900 did not alter Salisbury's view of international affairs. In October, a month after Chamberlain's memorandum, he wrote to Curzon recapitulating and defending his position.

> The Boer War has cost us a shilling income tax for several years. I do not know what a French war would cost us—but certainly several times as much. Therefore it is a matter of great importance to be very circumspect in our conduct towards her: though I readily admit that the arrogance of French tempers especially in the lower ranks of the services, makes the due maintenance of our rights a matter of difficulty and anxiety. I do not feel the same danger in the case of Russia—for though Russia is much more powerful and quite as unscrupulous she is less likely to be liable to a 'coup de tête'. As to Germany I have less confidence in her than you. She is in mortal terror on account of that long undefended frontier of hers on the Russian side. She will therefore never stand by us against Russia; but is always rather inclined to curry favour with Russia by throwing us over. I have no wish to quarrel with her; but my faith in her is infinitesimal.[4]

But as the pressure on Britain increased, as the Boer War dragged on and Russia occupied Manchuria, Salisbury's views

[1] Salisbury to Curzon, Aug. 1900. Ibid., Box S, Part 2.
[2] Salisbury to Curzon, 17 Oct. 1900. Ibid.
[3] Blanche E. C. Dugdale, *Arthur James Balfour*, vol. i, pp. 257–8.
[4] Salisbury to Curzon, 17 Oct. 1900. Curzon MSS, Box S, Part 2.

commanded less and less support in the Cabinet. Increasingly his colleagues came to believe that the safest way out of Britain's difficulties lay in co-operation with Germany, and after some years of growing disagreement the break finally came in the autumn of 1900. The Kaiser, who regarded the European relief expedition to Peking as a crusade and had procured the appointment of the German Field-Marshal Waldersee as its supreme commander, had just been offended by Russia's abrupt withdrawal of her troops from Peking before Waldersee had even arrived in China. Soon after, on 22 August, discussing the Far Eastern situation with Lascelles, the Ambassador in Berlin, he mentioned a fear that the British would depart from the policy of the Open Door and promised that if they gave an undertaking not to do so, they would 'find the German government on their side'.[1] Salisbury's immediate reaction was that the Kaiser was trying to separate Britain from France,[2] and he poured cold water on the whole idea.[3]

It was this reply which finally produced a revolt inside the Cabinet. The initiative was taken by Goschen, then First Lord of the Admiralty, who wrote to Chamberlain on 1 September that Salisbury's answer 'makes one despair' and proposing a meeting with some of their leading colleagues to bring pressure on him.[4] This meeting, held at the Admiralty on the 4th, authorised Goschen to send a telegram to Salisbury (then on holiday at Schlucht) recommending that, to please the Germans, British troops should not follow the Russian from Peking and impressing upon him 'the importance of taking advantage of the opportunity offered by the recent action of Russia to detach the German Emperor from Russia and bind him more closely to our interests'.[5] The array against the Prime Minister was formidable. As well as Chamberlain (who wrote his memorandum during this controversy), Goschen spoke for Lansdowne, who, as Secretary for War, wished for military reasons to withdraw from Peking but was ready to keep the British contingent there in the interests of the larger policy outlined in the telegram.[6] Goschen added that he believed Balfour to concur in

[1] B.D. II.8.
[2] Salisbury to Bertie, telegram, 24 Aug. 1900. Salisbury MSS, Telegrams from Schlucht.
[3] B.D. II.11.
[4] Julian Amery, *The Life of Joseph Chamberlain*, vol. iv, pp. 138–9.
[5] Goschen to Salisbury, telegram, 4 Sept. 1900. St Aldwyn MSS. Box PCC/72.
[6] Ibid.

their views—a belief apparently confirmed when on the 7th Brodrick, Salisbury's Under-Secretary, wrote to Chamberlain 'one line to say that Arthur generally concurs with you re Peking and Germany'.[1] It is plain, too, that Hamilton supported the revolt. He told Curzon in October of his regret at 'the extreme caution and dilatoriness' of the Foreign Office, which had lost a splendid opportunity for Anglo-German co-operation, and added that 'unless we are prepared to risk something ourselves or to throw in our lot with some of the great European Powers we cannot expect them to stand in with us or assist us in protecting our own special interests'.[2] Even Brodrick, Salisbury's own Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, described his reply to Germany as 'characteristic and I think unlucky'.[3]

On the other hand, Salisbury had the support of the professional staff of the Foreign Office, who, like him, were consistently sceptical about German intentions. Sanderson, the Permanent Under-Secretary, believed that 'the Germans have some agreement with Russia to leave her a free hand in Manchuria as a balance to their own sphere in Shantung'[4]; Bertie, the Assistant Under-Secretary in charge of Far Eastern affairs, was sure that Germany would not allow herself to be used against Russia and would exact a heavy price for an illusory co-operation.[5] But Salisbury's only support inside the Cabinet came from Hicks Beach, and even that was uncertain. He opposed Chamberlain's Yangtze policy because he looked 'with the greatest repugnance on adding to our enormous African responsibilities those which must result from a forward policy in China'; he wanted an immediate withdrawal from Peking; and he was afraid that Germany would drag Britain into more extensive commitments in China. But even he was ready for an Anglo-German arrangement if it meant that Germany would share British obligations in the Yangtze valley.[6]

The combination of Goschen, Chamberlain, Balfour, Hamilton, and Lansdowne was, therefore, too strong for Salisbury and drove

[1] Brodrick to Chamberlain, 7 Sept. 1900. J. Chamberlain MSS, Box JC 11/1. Balfour wrote to Brodrick a letter—not available—to say so, and Brodrick communicated it to Goschen and Chamberlain.
[2] Hamilton to Curzon, 11 Oct. 1900. Hamilton MSS, Letters to Curzon, vol. ii.
[3] Amery, *Joseph Chamberlain*, vol. iv, p. 139.
[4] Sanderson to Hardinge, 24 Oct. 1900. Hardinge MSS, vol. iii.
[5] B.D. II.12.
[6] Hicks Beach to Salisbury, 2 Sept. 1900. Salisbury MSS, Correspondence with Hicks Beach.

him reluctantly to conclude the Anglo-German China Agreement of 16 October.[1] Its terms were extremely unsatisfactory—Germany, resisting all attempts to commit her in Manchuria, would promise only to maintain the Open Door as far as she could exercise influence—but Chamberlain was 'delighted to see the Agreement with Germany and to think that events are slowly tending to draw us closer and to separate Germany from Russia'.[2] Hamilton too attached importance to it 'as it must tend to bring Germany and ourselves together'.[3]

Salisbury could no longer control the Cabinet. Several members were anxious to smooth the path for still further innovations in policy by engineering his departure from the Foreign Office, and this, after some devious manoeuvrings, they were able to accomplish in November. With his replacement by Lansdowne, who had, while at the War Office, supported Goschen and Chamberlain, the change consolidated the position of those impatient with the old policy. The more conservative forces remained powerful—Salisbury was still Prime Minister and Hicks Beach still Chancellor of the Exchequer, while the forceful Goschen retired—but both newcomers to the Cabinet, Selborne at the Admiralty and Brodrick at the War Office, favoured a break with the old policy. The change in the balance of forces inside the Cabinet was not complete, but it was great enough to open the way to a period of experiment in foreign policy.

[1] It is usually supposed (see e.g. Amery, op. cit., vol. iv, p. 138) that the dissidents were supported by Devonshire, and indeed the Duke is commonly regarded as one of the most pro-German members of the Cabinet. But neither in his own papers nor elsewhere is there any real evidence that he was pro-German, or indeed that he had any opinions at all on foreign affairs.

[2] Chamberlain to Balfour, 21 Oct. 1900. Salisbury MSS, Correspondence with Balfour.

[3] Hamilton to Curzon, 24 Oct. 1900. Hamilton MSS, Letters to Curzon, vol. ii.

2

The Approach to Germany November 1900 – June 1901

1

Salisbury's replacement by Lansdowne marked the triumph of the pro-German section of the Cabinet, and as soon as he was installed the new Foreign Secretary told Lascelles that 'we should use every effort to maintain and, if we can, to strengthen the good relations which at present exist between the Queen's Government and that of the Emperor'.[1] The prospects for this seemed good: the Anglo-German China Agreement had just been made, and both Richthofen, the new German Foreign Minister, and Eckardstein, the chargé d'affaires in London, were ready with assurances that the two countries could now act in harmony in the Far East.[2] To promote this friendship, Lansdowne insisted, against the wishes of the Prince of Wales, that the Duke of Connaught should attend the bicentenary celebrations of the Prussian monarchy in Germany in January 1901.[3] While there, the Duke could 'bear witness to our desire to maintain a complete understanding with Berlin'.[4]

The real test was soon to come. On 3 January *The Times* published an alleged agreement, the so-called 'Alexeiev-Tseng Agreement', between the local Russian and Chinese authorities which would, if ratified, legitimise Russia's control over Manchuria. At once the Far Eastern crisis was revived, and on the 12th Hayashi, the Japanese Minister, asked if Britain would join his country in inquiring about the reports at St Petersburg.[5]

[1] Lord Newton, *Lord Lansdowne: A Biography*, pp. 196–7.
[2] Eckardstein to Lansdowne, 24 Dec. 1900. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xii, Lascelles to Lansdowne, despatch No. 2, 4 Jan. 1901. F.O. 64/1520.
[3] Lascelles to Lansdowne, 12 Jan. 1901; Lansdowne to Lascelles, 17 Jan. 1901. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xii.
[4] Lansdowne to Lascelles, 17 Jan. 1901. Ibid.
[5] Lansdowne to MacDonald, despatch No. 6, 12 Jan. 1901. F.O. 46/538.

The Japanese request had to be treated with caution. In spite of the October Agreement, and in spite of the assurances received since then, there could be no certainty about how Germany would act. The usual doubts reasserted themselves: Lascelles warned that German opinion was 'dead against us'[1] and doubted whether the German government would dare, in the last resort, to antagonise Russia.[2] Lansdowne therefore asked Hayashi for time while he considered his request.[3]

At this point occurred the famous meeting at Chatsworth between Eckardstein and Chamberlain. According to Eckardstein, Chamberlain announced that he and Devonshire were convinced that the days of splendid isolation were now over and that Britain should join the Triple Alliance. A start might be made with a secret agreement on Morocco.[4] But this account rests on Eckardstein's word alone; and although Chamberlain did later confirm that the meeting at Chatsworth took place and that Morocco was discussed, he suggested that it was Eckardstein who had taken the initiative.[5] There is nothing in either Chamberlain's papers or Devonshire's to show that the possibility of British membership of the Triple Alliance was mentioned, and most probably Eckardstein was already beginning to misrepresent British views in order to force his own government into an understanding. In any case, the interview was plainly marked by great cordiality and must have encouraged British hopes of German friendship.

It was followed within a week by a striking demonstration of the strange attachment which the Kaiser often felt for this country. On hearing that the Queen, his grandmother, was seriously ill he at once hurried over to England and was with her when she died on 22 January. It was a generous gesture in view of the Anglophobia in Germany and the difficulties of the Boer War, and it made the Kaiser a popular figure in Great Britain. The official world reacted in the same way: the new King spoke frankly of his hostility to France and Russia,[6] and there was even an amicable

[1] Lascelles to Lansdowne, 17 Nov. 1900. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xii.
[2] Lascelles to Lansdowne, 5 Jan. 1901. Ibid.
[3] Lansdowne to MacDonald, despatch No. 8, 15 Jan. 1901. F.O. 46/538.
[4] *Die grosse Politik der europäischen Kabinette 1871–1914*. XVII.4979. Hereafter cited as G.P.
[5] In January 1902 (no day specified) Chamberlain wrote to Bertie that 'some time ago in a conversation at Chatsworth Baron Eckardstein talked of the desirability of an arrangement between Germany and England as to Morocco'. Bertie MSS, Series A.
[6] G.P. XVII.4986.

interview with Salisbury.[1] The Kaiser saw Lansdowne at Osborne on 25 January. Their conversation was inconclusive, and Lansdowne was probably disconcerted by the Kaiser's appeal for a 'European' combination against the Russo-American coalition which he believed to be impending; but at least the Kaiser had shown profound hostility to Russia and urged closer Anglo-German relations.[2]

All this was encouraging, but, at the end of January, even before the Kaiser had returned to Germany, British hopes fell again. The Russians had obtained a concession at Tientsin which, in Lansdowne's view, was so great in extent as to 'amount to a territorial acquisition'. If this was so, it violated the Anglo-German Agreement, and on 22 January he therefore proposed to the Germans that the Powers should refuse to recognise it.[3] Their reply was disappointing. Mühlberg, the Under-Secretary of State, told Lascelles on the 28th that he did not regard the concession as a threat to Chinese sovereignty and declined to take any action which was likely to be effective.[4] Even the Kaiser, when appealed to, admitted that 'the length of the Russo-German frontier . . . forces Germany to walk warily'.[5] Bertie, who had always shared Salisbury's scepticism about German intentions, now decided that 'they won't move an inch if Russian proceedings are in question'.[6]

Lansdowne was, on the other hand, anxious to work with the Germans if he could, and when the Japanese again began pressing for determined action, it was to them that he turned. On 5 February Hayashi asked if Britain would join Japan in warning China against ratifying the Alexeiev-Tseng agreement.[7] Lansdowne was disposed to humour the Japanese because, as he told Salisbury, 'the advice which they ask us to tender does not really commit us' and because 'we could probably prevail upon the German government to say something of the same sort'.[8] No reply was to be given

[1] J. A. S. Grenville, 'Lansdowne's abortive project of 12 March 1901 for a secret agreement with Germany', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, **27** (1954), p. 210.

[2] G.P. XVII.4987. There is no English account available, but some rough notes by Lansdowne must refer to this interview and substantially confirm the Kaiser's account. Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 199.

[3] Lansdowne to Lascelles, despatch No. 35, 22 Jan. 1901. F.O. 64/1518.

[4] Lascelles to Lansdowne, telegram No. 11, 28 Jan. 1901. F.O. 64/1524.

[5] Memo by Bertie, 4 Feb. 1901. Bertie MSS, Series A.

[6] Bertie to Lascelles, 30 Jan. 1901. Lascelles MSS, vol. i.

[7] Lansdowne to MacDonald, despatch No. 17, 5 Feb. 1901. F.O. 46/538.

[8] A note, Lansdowne to Salisbury, 5 Feb. 1901. Ibid.

to Hayashi until Eckardstein had been consulted.[1] This time the German response was encouraging. After a request from Lansdowne on the 7th,[2] they agreed on the 12th to deliver a warning at Peking substantially the same as that suggested by Japan.[3]

A Far Eastern 'triplice' of a sort had therefore been established; but the British were well aware of how precarious it was. The Kaiser's visit to Britain had, said Lascelles, caused 'consternation' in Germany,[4] and Bertie thought that he could not ignore the persistent Anglophobia of German opinion.[5] When, therefore, Japan proposed on the 15th that the two Powers should offer material assistance to China if Russia demanded an agreement affecting territorial rights,[6] the British at once drew back. Campbell, an Assistant Under-Secretary, observed that the Germans were unlikely to participate in such an offer,[7] and Lansdowne accordingly rejected the Japanese proposal as 'dangerously vague'. To satisfy them without committing himself, he suggested instead a formula by which the two Powers, with Germany, would consult if China were threatened but without any obligations to action. This formula he offered to recommend at Berlin.[8]

It was still being considered when the contingency for which it was prepared suddenly materialised. On 1 March the Chinese themselves precipitated a crisis by appealing to Britain, Germany, Japan, and the United States for mediation in their negotiations with Russia.[9] Lansdowne began at once to adopt a stiffer line. He told the Cabinet that Russia was trying to force upon China 'a permanent Treaty which will virtually establish a Russian protectorate . . . over the whole of Manchuria as well as Mongolia and Chinese Turkestan'. They must be challenged to produce the actual text of the treaty they were pressing.[10] On the same day, he assured the Chinese that he regarded their appeal as 'a matter of

[1] Minute, Lansdowne to Bertie, 5 Feb, 1901. F.O. 46/547. [2] B.D. II.43.
[3] Lansdowne to Lascelles, despatch No. 54, 12 Feb. 1901. F.O. 64/1518. The note at B.D. II, p. 36 is misleading: Lansdowne told Eckardstein that 'although the language used varied somewhat from that which we had suggested, it seemed to me that, in principle, the two announcements were in agreement'.
[4] Lascelles to Lansdowne, despatch No. 38, 15 Feb. 1901. F.O. 64/1520.
[5] Bertie to Lascelles, 13 Feb, 1901. Lascelles MSS, vol. i.
[6] MacDonald to Lansdowne, telegram No. 4, 15 Feb. 1901. F.O. 46/542.
[7] Minute by Campbell, 16 Feb. 1901. Ibid. [8] B.D. II.44.
[9] Communication by Chinese Minister, 1 March 1901. F.O. Print (China), vol. 7549, No. 2.
[10] Comments by Lansdowne, dated 1 March 1901, on draft of telegram No. 54, 4 March 1901, Lansdowne to Scott. F.O. 65/1624.

very serious importance' and advised them to wait while Britain consulted the other Powers.[1] His first step was to invite Germany and Japan to join him in asking Russia to communicate the draft treaty 'in order to enable us to arrive at a decision regarding the Chinese request for mediation'.[2] But this cautious policy was not enough to satisfy a sudden feeling of impatience, and on the 4th Britain alone, before replies had been received from Berlin and Tokyo, made the proposed demand at St Petersburg.[3] Lansdowne soon paid the penalty for this hasty action. On the 7th Lamsdorff 'resented with considerable warmth' the British request and spoke menacingly of the danger that the Czar might lose patience at British suspicions[4]; while in Berlin, Richthofen, the Foreign Minister, declared that Britain and Japan were more directly interested in Manchuria than Germany, who would therefore leave to them the initiative and indeed the greater part of any action which it was decided to take.[5] This was the clearest statement yet of Germany's intentions, and Lansdowne acknowledged that it 'obliges us to proceed with extreme caution'.[6]

At this point the third partner in the 'triplice' made a dramatic intervention. On the 10th Hayashi communicated two telegrams to the British government. The first was a report from the Japanese Minister at Berlin describing an interview at which Mühlberg had assured him that 'Germany will observe benevolent neutrality in case matters should come to a crisis'. Such an attitude on her part, Mühlberg had continued, would keep France neutral while Britain supported Japan. The second telegram communicated by Hayashi instructed him to ask Lansdowne whether these remarks accurately represented Germany's true intentions, and to inquire 'how far may Japan rely upon the support of Great Britain in case Japan finds it necessary to approach Russia'.[7] If, as Hayashi assumed it did,[8] the word 'approach' implied the use of force, the moment for a decision had at last come. Once again, before giving a definite answer, Lansdowne turned to Germany. After Richthofen's statement of the 7th, he did not do so very hopefully, and

[1] Lansdowne to Satow, 1 March 1901. F.O. Print (China), vol. 7549, No. 6.
[2] Lansdowne to MacDonald, despatch No. 22, 1 March 1901. F.O. 46/538; to Lascelles, despatch No. 69A, 1 March 1901. F.O. 64/1518.
[3] B.D. II.45.
[4] B.D. II.48.
[5] Lascelles to Lansdowne, telegram No. 14, 7 March 1901. F.O. 64/1524.
[6] Lansdowne to Lascelles, telegram No. 70, 9 March 1901. F.O. 64/1523.
[7] B.D. II.51.
[8] B.D. II.54.

he warned Hayashi at the outset that, so far as he could judge, the German government 'did not consider that German interests in that part of China were sufficiently marked to justify Germany in going to war in order to protect them'. An attitude which would keep the French in check 'could scarcely be described as neutral'. In any case, a statement of British policy must wait for a clarification of German intentions.[1] Lansdowne's estimate of Germany's position seemed to be confirmed when on the same day the Japanese Minister at Berlin, to whom Mühlberg's alleged promises had been made, told Lascelles that in his opinion Germany would do nothing to bring herself into conflict with Russia.[2]

Lansdowne was now in a dilemma. If he could not afford to risk war without the promise of German support, neither did he wish to abandon the Japanese. A memorandum by Bertie on the 11th expanded on the dangers of such a course. If France and Russia were allowed to crush Japan, the Far Eastern 'triplice' of 1895 might, Bertie feared, be re-constituted, 'and we should go to the wall'. Japan herself might be driven to 'a policy of despair, in which she may come to some sort of terms with Russia', and British interests would greatly suffer if she did.[3] Without Japan, Britain might find herself isolated in the Far East; and yet with her only as an ally she could not face what was thought to be the immense might of Russia. Lansdowne explained to Lascelles a few days later that 'our South African entanglements make it impossible for us to commit ourselves to a policy which might involve us in war, unless we can assure ourselves that any obligation which we might incur would be shared by another Power'.[4] It was taken for granted that Japan alone was not strong enough to fill this rôle.

German help was, therefore, essential. But it was also extremely doubtful, and Lansdowne was driven to conclude that his only chance of getting it was to make a bold offer of his own. He already knew that, if the Germans were to act at all, they would only do so if given a definite lead. Richthofen had said this frankly on the 7th,[5] and Lascelles believed that they would give no in-

[1] Lansdowne to MacDonald, despatch No. 27, 16 March 1901, recording an interview of 10 March. F.O. 46/538. [2] B.D. II.52. [3] B.D. II.54.
[4] Grenville, 'Lansdowne's abortive project', p. 212, quoting Lansdowne to Lascelles, 18 March.
[5] Lascelles to Lansdowne, telegram No. 14, 7 March 1901. F.O. 64/1524.

dication of their own attitude 'until we let them know exactly what we mean to do'.[1] Lansdowne therefore decided to make an unambiguous offer. On the 12th he circulated to the Cabinet a draft declaration, to which the Germans would be asked to subscribe, and which the two Powers would then make secretly to Japan.

> In the event of hostilities between Japan and Russia . . . it would be their object to limit as far as possible the extent of the war, and to that end they would remain neutral, reserving, however, to themselves absolute freedom of action should the course of events require them, in their own interests, to intervene on behalf of Japan. In the event, however, of any Power joining Russia in hostilities against Japan, the British and German Governments will give naval assistance to Japan to defend herself against such attack.[2]

Such an offer represented the best chance of persuading the reluctant Germans to commit themselves in the Far East, but it was also, as Lansdowne told his colleagues, 'intended to elicit from Germany a distinct statement of her intentions'.[3] He later told Lascelles that he had never expected the Germans to accept,[4] and if this was wisdom after the event, it would have been a reasonable calculation before it. Even if the offer failed in its main purpose, at least it would have ended a state of intolerable uncertainty. And Lansdowne was careful to tell the Cabinet that if Germany refused 'we shall have to reconsider the situation'.[5]

Lansdowne's policy did, however, meet with the opposition of more conservative influences. Sanderson, the Permanent Under-Secretary, had already warned that 'whatever we tell the Japanese will be repeated to the Germans and by them repeated at St Petersburg in whatever shape they think most suited to their game. This is probably the origin of the whole business.' Sanderson shared to the full the professional diplomats' suspicion of Germany.

[1] Lascelles to Bertie, 9 Mar. 1901. Bertie MSS, Series A.

[2] Grenville, op. cit., p. 210. Bertie had drawn up the first draft, which Lansdowne had strengthened by adding the clause contemplating Anglo-German intervention in a war between Russia and Japan alone (F.O. 46/547).

[3] Cabinet memorandum by Lansdowne, 12 March 1901. F.O. 46/547.

[4] 'Your telegram No. 17, as I anticipated, brought out the fact that Germany was *not* prepared to "keep a ring" for Russia and Japan.' Lansdowne to Lascelles, 18 March 1901. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xii.

[5] Cabinet memorandum by Lansdowne, 12 March 1901. F.O. 46/547.

The Germans were, he declared, encouraging Japan to go to war with Russia to exploit their own middle position, and if war did break out they would be found 'dancing round the combatants and ready to bleed whichever is first stunned'.[1] Sanderson could be overruled, but his views were repeated by Salisbury in the critical Cabinet which met on the 13th. One of Lansdowne's routine precautions had been to ask Monson in Paris if France was likely to assist Russia in a Far Eastern war, and the Ambassador had replied that 'both the present French government and the public at large would be disinclined to join Russia in a war with Japan—but that politicians in the Opposition would intrigue to make their abstention difficult'.[2] This had not deterred Lansdowne; but Salisbury attached particular importance to good relations with France, and the Ambassador's reply exactly reflected his own fears. He was not, moreover, convinced that German help could be relied upon; and he was to show increasing distaste for change of any sort. All this makes it practically certain, although he does not say so in his report to the King, that it was Salisbury who persuaded the Cabinet to hold back Lansdowne's draft declaration until the German attitude had been established. 'The Japanese have', he told the King, 'produced some rather ambiguous assurances from Germany promising a "benevolent neutrality" in case of a war between Russia and Japan. The Cabinet was unable to affix a meaning to this phrase; and felt that an explanation of it was necessary to enable them to answer the Japanese.'[3]

Salisbury was probably supported, as usual, by Hicks Beach, of whom Hamilton wrote a few days later that 'what with the increased taxation and the enormous increase of our peace expenditure, I doubt if the Chancellor of the Exchequer will assent to any course which indicates war with Russia'.[4] But Salisbury's success in winning over the pro-German majority in the Cabinet—Chamberlain, Balfour, Hamilton, Selborne, and Brodrick as well as Lansdowne himself—requires more explanation. The answer seems to be that on the 13th the Cabinet dealt only with the tactical question of how best to negotiate with the Germans, and not with the larger question of Anglo-German relations. As Salisbury told

[1] Sanderson to Lansdowne, 10 March 1901. Lansdowne MSS, vol. iii.
[2] Monson to Lansdowne, telegram No. 8, 9 March 1901. F.O. 27/3539.
[3] Salisbury to the King, 13 March 1901. Salisbury MSS, Royal Correspondence.
[4] Hamilton to Curzon, 22 March 1901. Hamilton MSS, Letters to Curzon, vol. iii.

the King, 'several members of the Cabinet are disposed to agree that England and Germany should join in undertaking to support Japan; but in the absence of any indication that Germany would be willing to take part in such an alliance it was thought better to defer any discussion on this point until Sir F. Lascelles' answer had been received.'[1] The substantive question was never, therefore, discussed, and the natural pro-German majority in the Cabinet had no chance to operate. Salisbury had been able to defeat Lansdowne's desire for a bold initiative.

That evening a telegram went to Lascelles instructing him to elucidate the meaning of 'benevolent neutrality'.[2] The reply was what Salisbury had probably foreseen. Mühlberg could promise no more than the 'strictest and most correct neutrality'.[3] On the 15th Bülow, the Chancellor, declared publicly in the Reichstag that the fate of Manchuria was of 'absolute indifference' to Germany and that the province was not covered by the Anglo-German Agreement. Lansdowne now had no alternative but to tell the Japanese, much to his regret, that in the event of war between them and Russia 'His Majesty's Government, like that of Germany, would probably remain neutral'.[4]

The Anglo-German-Japanese 'triplice' upon which Lansdowne had endeavoured to base his Far Eastern policy had now broken down, and it was the extreme caution on both sides, both of Salisbury and still more of the Germans, which had destroyed it. There was no sudden disillusionment—the desire to co-operate with them remained very strong—but it was from this moment that the pro-German sentiment of the Cabinet, which had been so strong in the winter of 1900–1, began to decline. If we may believe Eckardstein, Chamberlain now suspected that Germany passed everything on to Russia and, while still believing in the principle of a German alliance, was anxious 'not to burn his fingers a second time'.[5] This was indeed a common reaction in Britain, though none went so far as Chamberlain. There grew up the feeling that Germany had encouraged Britain and then, at the crucial moment, left her in the lurch. Increasingly it poisoned relations between the

[1] Salisbury to the King, 13 March 1901. Salisbury MSS, Royal Correspondence.
[2] B.D. II.55.
[3] Lascelles to Lansdowne, telegram No. 17, 14 March 1901. F.O. 64/1524.
[4] Lansdowne to MacDonald, despatch No. 27, 16 March 1901. F.O. 46/538.
[5] Eckardstein, *Ten Years at the Court of St. James'*, p. 205.

two countries. Somehow, a crucial decision had been taken without anyone (except perhaps Salisbury) having been aware of it.

But all this was for the future; Lansdowne's immediate task was to begin the search for a new Far Eastern policy.

2

British policy was still in this unsettled condition when on the 18th Eckardstein made his famous offer of a general defensive alliance between Britain and Germany.[1] He told Lansdowne that, although Germany would not accept an agreement limited to the Far East, she would 'entertain favourably the idea of an understanding of a more durable and extended character'. He suggested an arrangement directed solely against France and Russia, to become operative when either party was attacked by both those Powers. Lansdowne's first reaction was cautious and doubtful. 'Such a contract', he observed, 'seemed to me to entail the adoption of an identic foreign policy by both Powers in all their external relations.'[2] He told Lascelles privately that 'it would oblige us to adopt in all our foreign relations a policy which would no longer be British but Anglo-German'.[3] Lansdowne did not at any time during the spring of 1901 reject Eckardstein's plan explicitly, and he remained anxious to find some way of co-operating with Germany; but he had wanted an agreement in the Far East only, and he disliked the surrender of independence entailed in a more general alliance. His professional advisers were also cautious: Sanderson thought the proposals 'smack of a certain impulsiveness',[4] and Bertie wondered 'who would decide which was the attacker?'[5]

Without, therefore, either accepting or rejecting Eckardstein's offer, Lansdowne held it open while he sought for another way of overcoming Britain's difficulties in the Far East. These had been aggravated by the collapse of the 'triplice'. On the 19th Lansdowne agreed to a request by the Japanese that the two Powers should warn China against separate negotiations with any of the Powers[6]; but once again the Germans refused to join. Lascelles

[1] Eckardstein told his own government that the initiative came from Lansdowne; but it is now generally recognised that he made the offer himself and then misled the Germans. G.P. XVII.4994. Langer, *The Diplomacy of Imperialism*, pp. 728-9.
[2] B.D. II.77. [3] Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 200.
[4] Sanderson to Lascelles, 27 March 1901. Lascelles MSS, vol. iii, Part 2.
[5] Bertie to Lascelles, 20 March 1901. Lascelles MSS, vol. i.
[6] B.D. II.60.

concluded that they hoped to remain neutral in the conflict and mediate between Russia and the Anglo-Japanese combination.[1] But Lansdowne had already decided that he could not risk war without German support, and Britain therefore followed Germany in disengaging herself from Japan. A hint from Kato, the Japanese Foreign Minister, on the 22nd that Japan would go to war with Russia if Britain would keep France neutral was ignored.[2]

But Bertie had already described the dangers involved in the desertion of Japan. There seemed to be only one way out of all these difficulties: a direct Anglo-Russian settlement. This was the course which Lansdowne now adopted. On the 23rd he wrote to Scott:

> It is a great pity that he [Lamsdorff] will not play 'cartes sur table' with us. There is no desire here to be pedantic about Manchuria. We have already recognized its 'gravitation' for Railway purposes [in 1899] and we should not fall foul of any reasonable arrangement of the conditions under which Russian troops might be withdrawn. . . . With a little 'bonne volonté' and mutual confidence the whole affair ought to be capable of settlement.[3]

Both this search for agreement with Russia and his own undecided attitude about relations with Germany meant that Lansdowne could meanwhile hold Eckardstein at arm's length. On the 29th he repeated that, much as the Cabinet wished for a close understanding with Germany, 'they regarded with a certain amount of apprehension the idea of an international arrangement of the somewhat indefinite but very far reaching character' suggested by Eckardstein. Together the two men agreed to postpone consideration of it.[4] As Lansdowne explained to Lascelles, 'it will be difficult to make anything of the proposal, but, knowing the quarter in which it probably originated, I wished to treat it with all possible deference.'[5]

Lansdowne maintained this attitude of reserve as the Far Eastern crisis reached its height at the beginning of April. The

[1] Lascelles to Lansdowne, telegram No. 22, 21 March 1901. F.O. 64/1524.
[2] B.D. II.61.
[3] Lansdowne to Scott, 23 March 1901. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xxiv.
[4] B.D. II.79.
[5] Lansdowne to Lascelles, 1 April 1901. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xii. Plainly Lansdowne regarded the proposal as a genuine one, probably from the Kaiser, and did not suspect Eckardstein of fabrication.

Japanese continued to defy Russia and used such menacing language that for a time the two countries stood at the brink of war, but they received no encouragement from Britain. Sanderson advised strongly against any such move: 'I cannot myself think that we ought to go to war with Russia about Manchuria or to encourage the Japanese to do so. The Japanese cannot really permanently damage the Russians or prevent their progress.'[1] But Lansdowne, in view of his negotiations with Germany and Russia, needed no persuasion, and both China and Japan were told that Britain 'would not help by interceding with Russia or suggesting arbitration'. Hayashi's request for support was rejected.[2] The Japanese, however, persisted with their pressure at St Petersburg, and on the 5th the crisis suddenly receded when Russia climbed down and withdrew her draft convention with China.[3] All the problems had been postponed, not solved, for Russian troops remained in Manchuria; but at least there was no longer any need for urgency.

This removed the most pressing reason for an understanding with Germany. At the same time, a slight coolness sprang up between the two governments over the details of their China policy. Germany wanted to extract a large sum from China in compensation for the Boxer uprising and to raise the Chinese customs rate to enable her to pay it; Britain wished to weaken China as little as possible and objected to an increase in a tax which fell largely on her own commerce. At the end of March the German government sent Stuebel, a Foreign Office expert, to London to press the British to agree to a customs increase. An unhappy misunderstanding followed. Bertie, who was in charge of the Chinese negotiations, was assured by Eckardstein that Stuebel did not represent the Kaiser's views and so refused to yield an inch.[4] In fact, of course, the opposite was true. It was Stuebel, and not Eckardstein, who represented the views of Berlin, and he returned to Germany full of complaint at the brusque treatment he had suffered. It was this episode which led the Kaiser into his famous denunciation of the British government as 'unmitigated noodles' and into angry complaints that they were not treating him with confidence.[5] In turn, it was natural

[1] Sanderson to Lascelles, 3 April 1901. Lascelles MSS, vol. i.
[2] B.D. II.67; Lansdowne to MacDonald, despatch No. 37, 6 April 1901. F.O. 46/538. [3] B.D. II.65. [4] Bertie to Lascelles, 2 April 1901. Lascelles MSS. vol. i.
[5] B.D. II.72; B.D. I, p. 332.

for Lansdowne to resent his attacks on the weakness of Britain's Far Eastern policy when it was Germany who had held him back.[1] Altogether, it was an inauspicious moment for Eckardstein to revive the alliance project, and when he did so on 9 April Lansdowne again put him off, repeating to Lascelles that 'Lord Salisbury regards the scheme with, to say the least, suspicion'.[2]

The storm over the Stuebel mission soon blew over, but it did illustrate the divergence of the policies of the two Powers in China and so contribute to a growing uneasiness in Anglo-German relations. Sanderson found his earlier suspicions confirmed. The Kaiser was, he told Satow, 'apparently furious with us for not having got into a quarrel with Russia over the business and obviously that would have suited the Germans very well'.[3] His conclusion was that a settlement with Russia 'would be much the best plan if it could be managed'.[4] This was also of course one of the lines being followed by Lansdowne, and on the 10th Scott, acting on his instructions, told Lamsdorff that 'there was no desire on the part of His Majesty's Government to interfere with any reasonable arrangement of conditions for the evacuation of Manchuria'.[5] Lamsdorff's reply, made on the 17th, was remarkably friendly. He spoke cordially of Anglo-Russian relations and declared that 'with regard especially to China a thorough understanding which would enable them to render each other mutual assistance was not only practically possible, but even indicated by a true appreciation of their real interests'.[6]

This despatch reached London on 22 April, only five days after a similar overture from Hayashi. The Japanese Minister had proposed that Britain and Japan 'should endeavour to arrive at some permanent understanding for the protection of their interests' in the Far East. Lansdowne's reply, with his Russian and German negotiations still in suspense, was necessarily non-committal. 'I told the Minister that I would not fail to bear in mind what he had said but that without some substantive proposal for giving effect to such a policy as he had indicated I could scarcely be expected to express an opinion in regard to its merits.'[7]

Overtures from Russia and Japan had therefore been received at

[1] B.D. II.81. [2] Ibid. [3] B.D. II, p. 58. [4] B.D. II.73.
[5] Scott to Lansdowne, despatch No. 106, 12 April 1901. F.O. 65/1620.
[6] Scott to Lansdowne, despatch No. 110, 17 April 1901. F.O. 65/1620.
[7] B.D. II.99.

about the same time. There could be no doubt about which Lansdowne would accept. Since the beginning of the crisis his policy had been founded on a belief that Britain could not risk war with Russia, and perhaps France, with Japan only as an ally. The Russian proposal was therefore followed up, the Japanese forgotten. On the 23rd Lansdowne instructed Scott that 'we shall certainly not reject an overture, if one is made to us, and you cannot do wrong in repeating that we wish to be friends and that we recognize the special interests which Russia possesses in Manchuria'. He suggested that a start might be made by agreement on the question of the Chinese indemnity.[1] This, he hoped, would achieve two objects. It would provide the confidence necessary for larger negotiations; and it would settle a vexed, if minor, question in which Britain was in some danger of being isolated. Accordingly, Scott told Lamsdorff on 2 May that 'he might always rely on finding you [Lansdowne] animated by a similar desire to discuss every question affecting the interests of our two countries in a friendly spirit with a view to reconciling our interests and that we quite understand that Russia possessed special interests in Manchuria'. He also transmitted Lansdowne's suggestion of starting with the Chinese indemnity.[2]

The negotiations, thus begun, never really got under way. Lansdowne told Satow on the 11th that British policy on the indemnity had three objects: to avoid the bankruptcy of China; to oppose any rise in the Chinese tariff; and to block any proposal for a joint international guarantee of a Chinese loan.[3] This last device, which had been urged by France, was opposed because the credit of Britain was higher than that of any of the other Powers and a joint guarantee would be 'in effect using British credit to pay non-British debts'.[4] It was upon these apparently minor obstacles that the Russian negotiations foundered; the accumulated mistrust between the two countries was too great to overcome the initial difficulties. To avoid a joint guarantee, Lansdowne had evolved a scheme by which China should pay her indemnity by the issue to each creditor Power of interest bearing bonds to the value of its

[1] Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, pp. 215–16.
[2] Scott to Lansdowne, 2 May 1901. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xxiv.
[3] Lansdowne to Satow, 11 May 1901. F.O. Print (China), vol. 7668, No. 66.
[4] Cabinet Report, Balfour to the King, 26 April 1901. Salisbury MSS, Royal Correspondence.

share of the compensation.[1] The Germans, to Lansdowne's pleasure, accepted this plan at once,[2] but the Powers of the Dual Alliance resisted it. Cambon announced that France would insist on a customs increase, and Witte condemned the project as offering not the payment of an indemnity but a 'simple promise of tribute'.[3] Russian good faith had, in Lansdowne's eyes, failed to satisfy the test he had set it.

This left only the German negotiations; but here too the difficulties were very great. On the 23rd Hatzfeldt, the Ambassador, who had just resumed his duties, stated flatly that Germany would expect Britain to join the Triple Alliance. Although the proposal had not been put in these words before, it would be a mistake to exaggerate their novelty. Lansdowne had always understood the essence of Eckardstein's plan to be that Britain should undertake commitments of a general nature outside the Far East, and his reply to Hatzfeldt merely repeated the objections he had already made. 'I . . . said', he reported to his leading colleagues, 'that it seemed to me to follow from any such arrangements that each of the allies would have a right to claim a voice in guiding and controlling the external policy of the others. I was afraid that in this country there would be a great reluctance to allow our liberty of action in regard to questions of foreign policy to be restricted in this manner.'[4]

As before, Lansdowne disliked the comprehensive nature of the project but was so anxious to co-operate with Germany in some way or other that he could not bring himself to reject it at once. At the end of May he even instructed Sanderson to prepare a draft treaty. Sanderson approached his task with reluctance, arguing that 'however the Convention may be worded, it seems to me that it will practically amount to a guarantee to Germany of the provinces conquered from France, and that is the way in which the French will look at it. I do not see exactly what Germany will guarantee to us.' He did, however, prepare two drafts the second of which recognised Germany's obligations under the Triple Alliance. The draft Treaty itself was between Britain and Ger-

[1] Lansdowne to Satow, 11 May 1901. F.O. Print (China), vol. 7668, No. 66.
[2] Lascelles to Lansdowne, telegram No. 31, 14 May 1901. F.O. 64/1524; Lansdowne to Lascelles, telegram No. 135, 20 May 1901. F.O. 64/1523.
[3] Lansdowne to Monson, despatch No. 226, 20 May 1901. F.O. 27/3531; Scott to Lansdowne, telegram No. 22, 19 May 1901. F.O. 65/1625.
[4] B.D. II.82.

many alone but it could be invoked when either party was involved in war with any two other Powers 'in defence of its legitimate interests or in consequence of a defensive alliance contracted by it and made known to the other High Contracting Party'.[1] At the same time, Brodrick actually asked Kitchener, then Commander-in-Chief in South Africa, what mounted troops he would ask for if he had to send three army corps to the assistance of Germany in a Continental war.[2] The inquiry was not followed up in any way, and was probably a purely personal initiative by Brodrick himself. It does, however, offer a striking proof of how near Britain came to making a German alliance.

Salisbury had earlier arranged that the whole question should be discussed by an 'inner Cabinet' of himself, Lansdowne, Hicks Beach, Devonshire, Balfour, and Chamberlain, although it is not certain whether it was now brought formally before this body. Nor is there any record, in Salisbury's reports to the King, that it was discussed by the whole Cabinet. We do know, however, that during May some Ministers, including two, and perhaps more, who were not in the Inner Cabinet, gave the matter some thought. The Cabinet was divided and at least two of its members wanted Britain to join the Triple Alliance.[3] One of these was Hamilton, who was, as he told Curzon, alarmed at the strain imposed on Britain by the defence of the biggest Empire in the world:

> I am gradually coming round to the opinion that we must alter our foreign policy, and throw our lot in, for good or bad, with some other Power. On the whole, I think, the best alliance we could form would be to join the Triple Alliance. Such a combination would guarantee the peace of Europe and would, I believe, enable us to reduce our expenditure, both military and naval. As we now stand, we are an object of envy and of greed to all the other Powers. Our interests are so vast and ramified that we touch, in some shape or other, the interests of almost every great country in every continent. Our interests being so extended makes

[1] B.D. II.85.

[2] Brodrick to Kitchener, 31 May 1901. Kitchener MSS, P.R.O. 30/57/22.

[3] It is plain from the Brodrick and Hamilton letters that Ministers not in the Inner Cabinet were at least thinking the question over. That the Inner Cabinet had formally considered the matter previously appears from a letter from Lansdowne to Chamberlain of 24 May, saying that he had drawn up a record of his conversation with Hatzfeldt and sent it to Salisbury. 'I have asked him', said Lansdowne, 'to circulate it to those members of the Cabinet who considered the question before and to convene us when he is ready.' Lansdowne to Chamberlain, 24 May 1901, Chamberlain MSS, Box JC 11/4.

it almost impossible for us to concentrate sufficiently, in any one direction, the pressure and power of the Empire so as to deter foreign nations from trying to encroach upon our interests in that particular quarter.[1]

Hamilton's views were shared by at least one member of the Inner Cabinet. This was Balfour, who later in the year was to be in profound disagreement with Lansdowne over foreign policy. The disadvantage Lansdowne saw in joining the Triple Alliance—its world-wide character—was to Balfour its main advantage, for it meant also world-wide security. Balfour also believed, more than any other member of the Cabinet, that Britain had a direct interest in Europe.[2]

On the other side, Hatzfeldt's proposal met with uncompromising rejection from Salisbury. His famous memorandum of 29 May declared against it for two reasons. First he used the specific argument that 'even in its most naked aspect the bargain would be a bad one for this country': the liability of defending Germany and Austria against Russia was less than that of defending Britain against France and 'a promise of defensive alliance with England would excite bitter murmurs in every rank of German society'. Salisbury's second argument turned upon a general defence of traditional policy. Isolation was 'a danger in whose existence we have no historical reason for believing'. Permanent engagements were in any case impossible between two parliamentary countries—and here Salisbury showed again that characteristic suspicion of parliamentary institutions that guided his French policy and was to produce doubt about the Japanese Alliance. In any case, he had no desire to give up Britain's freedom of movement. Unlike most of his colleagues, he had not been persuaded by the crisis through which Britain had passed that a radical change of policy was necessary. He had a deep-rooted aversion to any form of commitment in advance and remained attached to the ease of manœuvre and empiricism of policy which formed the virtues of Splendid Isolation.[3]

Salisbury's attitude was probably decisive. Lansdowne himself had been wavering all through the spring and was still undecided at the end of May. Salisbury's unqualified opposition determined him to do what his own uncertainty already tempted him to do,

[1] Hamilton to Curzon, 25 April 1901. Hamilton MSS, Letters to Curzon, vol. iii.
[2] See pp. 63–5. [3] B.D. II.86.

and put the whole question off yet again. He told Lascelles that he doubted whether anything would come of the Triple Alliance proposal, but still spoke of considering 'some alternative form of agreement, perhaps limited to particular eventualities'.[1] He still wanted to find some way of working with Germany, and even the possibility of British entry into the Triple Alliance was not entirely rejected. An alliance would, he told Lascelles in August, be 'a big fence . . . to ride at', but 'I should not mind having a try if I knew what was on the other side'.[2] In fact, when the question was taken up again in the autumn, circumstances had completely changed. It was to become apparent that, as in March, the real decision had been taken with no one, with the possible exception of Salisbury, having been aware of the fact.

3

The Moroccan situation, although less urgent than the Chinese, was also a great and growing source of danger. Salisbury as Foreign Secretary had followed a generally inactive policy, yielding small concessions to the French and making no bid for German support. He had met with the impatient opposition of Chamberlain, who had dropped hints to Hatzfeldt about partition, and also of Nicolson, the Minister at Tangiers, who pressed for firm action against the French.[3] Lansdowne, who had no desire to add to his Chinese troubles, followed at first a quiet policy, trying neither to make concessions to the French nor to provoke them. No action was taken against them, but he ignored a hint from Cambon in January 1901 that 'it might be desirable one of these days that we should arrive at an understanding as to certain boundaries which were still undecided'.[4] In spite of this lack of response, Cambon returned to this theme on 13 March. 'Our interests, he imagined, were principally concerned with the coast, with which France did not desire to meddle; would it not be possible, [he] asked, for us to arrive at some amicable agreement as to the extension of French influence in these unsettled districts?'[5] Lansdowne, in

[1] B.D. II.89.
[2] Lansdowne to Lascelles, 28 Aug. 1901. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xii.
[3] A. J. P. Taylor, 'British policy in Morocco, 1886–1902', *Eng. Hist. Rev.*, **66** (1951), pp. 364–6.
[4] Lansdowne to Monson, despatch No. 16, 15 Jan. 1901. F.O. 27/3531.
[5] Lansdowne to Monson, 13 March 1901. F.O. Print (Newfoundland), vol. 7817, No. 31.

words that made his attitude plain, described this to Chamberlain as a proposal that 'we should be complaisant at the intended plundering of Morocco by the French'.[1] Chamberlain, on the other hand, was ready to go further, and his reply envisaged the opening of a discussion about the future of Morocco. But this was not to be the beginning of an Anglo-French entente, and he warned Lansdowne that 'if we are to discuss such a large question as Morocco, please bear in mind that the Germans will have something to say—and both they and we will want compensation'.[2] Lansdowne, however, was not yet ready for this and his rejection of Cambon's overture was definite. 'I did not see what opening there was for any transaction between us in these regions. The country in question did not belong to us, nor did I see how either of us could announce to the world that we had come to terms on so questionable a basis.'[3]

Lansdowne also refused to meet the French in the smaller questions that lay between the two nations. One of these, a minor but persistent irritant in relations, was the existence of special French fishery privileges in Newfoundland. On 6 March Cambon proposed that these should be surrendered in exchange for a cession of territory in the Gambia,[4] but Lansdowne replied that this was 'out of the question. . . . We should be making a sacrifice of the interests of persons who have practically no concern with Newfoundland.'[5] In the next few days, however, he began to reconsider his attitude. A minute by Gosselin, an Assistant Under-Secretary, proposed on the 16th that France could receive the territorial compensation she required by a rectification of the Nigerian frontier.[6] This solution was recommended by Lansdowne to Chamberlain with the comment, 'I wish Cambon would propose it',[7] and taken up enthusiastically by Chamberlain. He widened it to suggest an exchange of Dahomey and its hinterland either for the Gambia or for territory in Borneo; this would, he told Lansdowne, 'really be a good thing as it would immensely lessen the territory where our boundaries are co-terminous with the French'.[8]

[1] Lansdowne to Chamberlain, 16 March 1901. Chamberlain MSS, Box JC 11/4.
[2] Amery, *Joseph Chamberlain*, vol. iv, pp. 163–4.
[3] Lansdowne to Monson, 20 March, 1901. F.O. Print (Newfoundland), vol. 7817, No. 36.
[4] Lansdowne to Monson, 6 March 1901. Ibid., No. 29.
[5] Lansdowne to Monson, 13 March 1901. Ibid., No. 31.
[6] Memorandum by Gosselin, 16 March 1901. Ibid., No. 33.
[7] Lansdowne to Chamberlain, 16 March 1901. Chamberlain MSS, Box JC 11/4.
[8] Amery, op. cit., pp. 163–4.

The more imaginative Chamberlain had already grasped the essentials of a general agreement, which could only be based upon an interchange of rights in unconnected parts of the world. But Lansdowne shrank from so ambitious a plan and told Cambon that he 'deprecated any attempt at a transaction on so vast a scale, and would rather avoid discussing it'.[1] Even Gosselin's scheme, which had apparently obtained his approval, was not mentioned.

Attention now turned once again to Morocco. On 31 March Nicolson reported with enthusiasm that the Sultan had decided upon an extensive scheme of reforms and had asked for a British loan to carry them out.[2] Nicolson, always eager to back any plan promising to revive Morocco, pressed Lansdowne to co-operate with the Germans in supporting him. 'If he can get his loan and secure German support and assistance in developing the country,' he wrote, 'a future might yet lie before Morocco.'[3] This insistence stirred Lansdowne into action. He finally sanctioned a visit to London by Menebhi, the pro-British Minister of War, which Nicolson had been urging for some time,[4] and approved a 'quite unreserved' conversation between Nicolson and the German Minister.[5] But he also warned that 'we shall be very careful as to what we say' to Menebhi.[6]

By the time Menebhi arrived in London on 22 June, the need for caution was greater than ever. The British had failed to reach an understanding with Germany and were threatened with a renewal of the Far Eastern crisis at any time. Monson had heard rumours that France was on the point of assuming the protectorate of Morocco,[7] and at the beginning of June there had been a brief but revealing moment of panic at a report that the French and Russian fleets were mobilising simultaneously.[8] Menebhi was therefore received with respect, but the British were careful to make no promises to him. Nicolson, who had accompanied him to England,

[1] Lansdowne to Monson, despatch No. 101, 20 March 1901. F.O. Print (Newfoundland), vol. 7817, No. 36.
[2] Nicolson to Lansdowne, despatch No. 36, 31 March 1901. F.O. Print (Morocco), vol. 7926.
[3] Nicolson to Lansdowne, 1 April 1901. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xix.
[4] Lansdowne to Nicolson, 4 April 1901. Ibid.
[5] Lansdowne to Nicolson, 9 April 1901. F.O. Print (Morocco), vol. 7926, No. 68; Nicolson to Lansdowne, 10 April 1901. Ibid., No. 90; Lansdowne to Nicolson, 25 April 1901. Ibid., No. 102.
[6] Lansdowne to Nicolson, 4 April 1901. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xix.
[7] Monson to Lansdowne, despatch No. 221, 14 June 1901. F.O. 27/3535.
[8] Lansdowne to Monson, telegram No. 72, 11 June 1901. F.O. 27/3539.

wished to give him a list, not only of harmless economic reforms of general benefit, but also of sweeping administrative reforms designed to rejuvenate the country.[1] Lansdowne certainly wished Morocco to strengthen herself if she could do so without complications, but he took alarm at the idea of an official list of recommendations to Menebhi, to which the British government might find itself committed. He would therefore only consent to Nicolson's suggestions if it was 'clearly established that they are in no sense the demands of H.M.G. but private suggestions made at H.E.'s request'.[2] Nicolson accordingly added a preamble to his letter making it clear that the suggestions were entirely his own private views.[3] The French Ambassador was told of the innocuous economic proposals and gave in return an assurance that France had no desire to 'raise serious questions in Morocco'.[4] When Menebhi cast doubts upon French good faith, he was simply told that their promises were 'very specific'.[5] Lansdowne continued to let sleeping dogs lie in Morocco, and Menebhi left London virtually empty-handed.

Menebhi then went on to Berlin. While he was there, Mentzingen, the German Minister at Tangiers, denounced French designs in Morocco and declared that the Kaiser was even ready to go to war to thwart them.[6] After the Manchurian episode, this news made little impression in London. In Sanderson's view, Mentzingen was 'a sort of second Eckardstein with even more terrible stories of the villainies of other Powers and the extreme friendliness and uprightness of Germany'.[7] Such scepticism seemed justified when, by his own account, Mühlberg had told Menebhi that, once free of her South African entanglements, Britain could hold France in check with Germany neutral.[8] This was similar to the notorious German promise allegedly made to Japan in March, and Lansdowne replied that reports of French activity were 'much exaggerated' and that, after Cambon's assurances, it was 'difficult

[1] Memo by Nicolson, 25 June 1901. Section D contains these administrative proposals, and it was not printed. F.O. 99/381.
[2] Minute by Lansdowne on memo by Gosselin, 28 June 1901. Ibid.
[3] Memo by Nicolson, 25 June 1901, with later addition. Ibid.
[4] Lansdowne to Monson, despatch No. 299, 3 July 1901. F.O. 27/3532.
[5] Memo of 3 July 1901. F.O. Print (Morocco), vol. 7926, No. 171.
[6] Maclean to Barrington, 15 July 1901. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xix.
[7] Ibid., minute by Sanderson.
[8] Gough to Lansdowne, despatch No. 177, 23 July 1901. F.O. 64/1521.

. . . to believe' that France meditated forward action in Morocco.[1]

Lansdowne had been hoping to keep the Moroccan question quiet, but when a crisis suddenly blew up at the end of July it showed that, since he would not make a settlement with France, his only resource was to turn to Germany. Nicolson reported on the 28th that the Sultan was about to disgrace Menebhi, who was the leader of the anti-French party at court and held high British and German decorations.[2] Lansdowne at once appealed to Berlin. 'Our language should, if possible, be the same as that held by the German government.'[3] Mühlberg's discouraging reply was that Morocco 'was a question of far greater importance to England than to Germany'.[4] In fact, the crisis went as quickly as it had come when the report of Menebhi's impending disgrace proved to be untrue; but it had shown that Lansdowne's policy of reserve would only be successful while Morocco was quiet. If an emergency arose, he would either have to settle with France or turn to Germany. He was lucky that any further crisis was staved off until the end of 1902.

A curious misunderstanding in August 1901 finally destroyed all hope for an Anglo-German policy in Morocco. Edward VII was about to visit the Kaiser at Willemshöhe and before the meeting was given a memorandum by Lansdowne on Anglo-German relations. The section relating to Morocco stated that the policy of the two Powers there 'would appear to be identical', with both anxious to maintain the status quo and both likely to resent any indignity to Menebhi.[5] This was not an advance to Germany; the memorandum was for the King's private information and not for communication to the Kaiser. But Edward misunderstood this and, when he met the Kaiser on 23 August, he gave him the memorandum.[6] The Germans, unaware of the mistake, prepared a reply which stated flatly that 'the Morocco question by itself is not sufficiently important for us to justify a policy by which Germany might incur the risk of serious international complications'.[7]

Meanwhile the British were growing indignant over Germany's

[1] Lansdowne to Gough, despatch No. 253, 29 July 1901. F.O. 64/1519.
[2] Nicolson to Lansdowne, 28 July and 7 August 1901. F.O. Print (Morocco), vol. 7926, Nos. 188 and 211.
[3] Lansdowne to Lascelles, 13 Aug. 1901. Ibid., No. 218.
[4] Lascelles to Lansdowne, 16 Aug. 1901. Ibid., No. 223.
[5] B.D. II.104, Enclosure 1.
[6] Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 204.
[7] B.D. II.104, Enclosure 2.

attitude to the Chinese indemnity negotiations, which dragged on throughout the summer. The Germans, reluctant to oppose Russia consistently, did not give the British the support which they felt to be owing to them. Campbell told Satow that 'we are especially furious with the German who seems not to give you a ¼ of the support we are promised from Berlin',[1] and even Lansdowne confessed that he was 'rather cross'.[2] This subject too was raised in the memorandum prepared for the King, and when the Germans replied that their aim had been to prevent a rupture between the Powers, Lansdowne commented that 'what we complain of is that when a rupture was apprehended we were always invited to give way, even if we were not ignored altogether'.[3]

By August 1901 the British had, therefore, accumulated a large number of grievances against the Germans, caused largely by their failure to come down firmly on the British side against France and Russia. The result was that the movement away from Germany, already apparent as early as March, gained increasing momentum. A letter from Lansdowne to Lascelles on 28 August recognised this fact for the first time. He rehearsed all his complaints, real or imagined, against the Germans: they had 'characteristically' betrayed the spirit of the Agreement of 1900; they had abandoned Japan after urging her to fight and then blamed Britain for weakness; they had obstructed British policy in the Chinese indemnity negotiations; and they had refused to make a move in Morocco. Inevitably, this succession of disputes had its effect on the larger question of Anglo-German relations. 'As for a "complete understanding" between Germany and ourselves . . . no one could have striven harder than I have to maintain such an understanding . . . but [it] cannot be fruitful of good results unless the conduct of the parties to it proves to the world that they are in loyal co-operation.' Even now he did not reject the idea of an alliance and promised that the Cabinet would take up the question again in the autumn; but the chances of success were growing steadily fainter.[4]

The two Powers were drifting apart, not as a result of a deliberate decision on the part of either, but because of the pressure of

[1] Campbell to Satow, 19 July 1901. Satow MSS, P.R.O. 30/33/7/1.
[2] Lansdowne to Lascelles, 6 Aug. 1901. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xii.
[3] Lansdowne to Lascelles, 28 Aug. 1901. Ibid.
[4] Lansdowne to Lascelles, 28 Aug. 1901. Ibid.

events; but these events reflected the underlying divergencies between their interests. The Germans had no real interest in China or Morocco, the British (except Balfour) none in Austria or Italy. Britain was a great imperial and naval Power and was not prepared to assume the radically new responsibilities involved in alliance with a great Continental Power. With France, on the other hand, relations steadily improved, once again not because of a definite decision, but because France was a great colonial Power and it was found increasingly convenient to settle the colonial disputes at issue with her. Such a settlement, because it took place in areas of interest common to both, need not involve the great realignment of policies demanded by an understanding with Germany. During 1901 Lansdowne moved very slowly towards recognition of this fact. In July Cambon renewed his proposal for a surrender by France of her fishery privileges in exchange for compensation elsewhere.[1] Lansdowne had once rejected this as 'out of the question', but he now wrote to Chamberlain: 'I don't see why a settlement should be unattainable—I wish they would ask us for a bit of hinterland somewhere or other.'[2] Chamberlain concurred[3]; and on the 31st Lansdowne brought himself to do what he had refused to do in March, and open a discussion. Progress was still extremely slow, and he rejected the demand, which Cambon had renewed, for the Gambia on the ground that 'it would give rise to further demands on each side for concessions and counter concessions, demands which, in my opinion, would probably destroy all hopes of an arrangement'. But he did drop a hint that, if the French were to ask for compensation elsewhere, he would be ready to discuss it with them.[4] In fact, Cambon refused to respond to the hint, and by insistence on the Gambia produced deadlock. Lansdowne, who was not yet ready to make a proposal of his own, remained silent. Movement towards settlement with the French was painfully slow; but at least it had begun.

The most striking example of the steady change in the relative positions of France and Germany in Lansdowne's policy was in Siam. There, as in Morocco, Britain and France were rivals, with

[1] Memorandum by Cambon, 24 July 1901. F.O. Print (Newfoundland), vol. 7817, No. 79.

[2] Lansdowne to Chamberlain, 24 July 1901. Chamberlain MSS, Box JC 11/4.

[3] Chamberlain to Lansdowne, 24 July 1901. Ibid.

[4] Lansdowne to Monson, 31 July 1901. F.O. Print (Newfoundland), vol. 7817, No. 83.

the possibility of German intervention. In October, Jaequemyns, a special adviser to the King of Siam, was sent to Paris, and while there told Monson that he was considering a visit to Berlin to try to build an Anglo-Japanese-German combination to protect Siam against France. Lansdowne's rejection of German intervention was emphatic.

> Her interests are different from ours, and she has a habit of securing her pound of flesh whenever she confers or makes belief to confer a favour. In this case, I should be afraid of her cutting the pound off our joint. She has lately been trying to squeeze out British employees of the Siamese Government and she is sure to seek privileges or preferences of some sort at our expense.[1]

[1] Lansdowne to Monson, 13 Oct. 1901. Lansdowne MSS, vol. ix.

3

The Japanese Alliance, 1901–1902

1

In April Lansdowne had deserted Japan rather than go to war with Russia with her only as an ally. He knew at the time that he was risking isolation and impotence in the Far East; and since then these dangers had been driven home to him by German behaviour in the indemnity negotiations. It therefore became, as he told the Cabinet, 'of the utmost importance that we should stand well with her [Japan] in the Far East'. He added his opinion that 'she is a little sore with us and inclined to think that we have not supported her sufficiently against Russia'.[1]

An opportunity to assuage this feeling of resentment soon came. He had finally persuaded the Powers to accept his suggestion that the Chinese indemnity should be paid by the issue to each creditor nation of interest-bearing bonds which it could then capitalise by putting on the market. Since the rate of interest to be paid by China had been fixed at four per cent, a creditor nation would lose if it could only induce the market to accept its share of the bonds by offering interest at a higher rate than this. This was the case with Japan, whose credit was lower than that of the European Powers. A collective guarantee would have evaded this difficulty, and it was only with reluctance that the Japanese accepted Lansdowne's plan of a separate guarantee by each Power of its own share of the bonds. But Lansdowne insisted—he still hoped to manage the Japanese without concessions. He rejected their suggestions that the British should join in guaranteeing their bonds[2]

[1] Memo by Lansdowne, 19 June 1901. Salisbury MSS, Cabinet Memoranda, Foreign and Imperial.

[2] MacDonald to Lansdowne, telegram No. 34, 20 May 1901 and minute by Lansdowne. F.O. 46/542.

and that their nominal share should be increased by one quarter.[1] He even spoke of bringing pressure on them,[2] and confided to Russia his opposition to their demands.[3] All he would do was to offer on 21 June to transfer to them a number of bonds which would still have left them suffering a loss; and this offer, on the 26th, they refused.[4] When on 10 July they returned to a modified version of their demand for an increase of one quarter in the value of the bonds, he again refused and added sternly that he 'trusted that this question, which, after all, was not of first-rate importance, would not be allowed to retard the progress of the negotiations'.[5]

Lansdowne had been reduced to hoping that the Japanese would continue to support Britain but demand nothing in return. His illusion was soon shattered. At the beginning of July Eckardstein began to give him repeated warning that a Russo-Japanese *rapprochement* was imminent,[6] and these warnings culminated on 16 July in the information that Japan was with Russian approval using her share of the indemnity to arrange a French loan.[7] Lansdowne's fears at once sprang into life. Even before Eckardstein's news, a memorandum by Bertie on 20 June had again reminded him of the dangers involved in a Russo-Japanese reconciliation and suggested that they could be avoided by a formal agreement between Britain and Japan. Britain could buy Japan's share of the bonds in exchange for mutual undertakings that 'neither Power will without consultation with the other enter into a separate Agreement with any other Power in regard to China'.[8] Lansdowne had not at the time acted upon Bertie's suggestion; but then came Eckardstein's warnings to reinforce the anxiety he had already felt. Prevarication was no longer possible, and Lansdowne was faced with the choice between risking a commitment to Japan and risking isolation in the Far East. He chose the former. Isolation was an immediate danger; perhaps the dangers of commitment could be avoided later, by careful diplomacy and precise drafting. Lansdowne may also have felt that action, any action, would be better

[1] Whitehead to Lansdowne, telegram No. 37, 30 May 1901. Ibid.
[2] Minute by Lansdowne. Ibid.
[3] Lansdowne to Scott, despatch No. 184, 19 June 1901. F.O. 65/1618.
[4] B.D. II.100–1.
[5] Lansdowne to Whitehead, despatch No. 77, 10 July 1901, F.O. 46/538.
[6] Memo by Bertie, 2 July 1901. F.O. 17/1506; G.P. XVII.5040.
[7] Lansdowne to Gough, despatch no. 241, 16 July 1901. F.O. 64/1519.
[8] Memo by Bertie, 20 June 1901. F.O. 46/547.

than mere drifting. He had taken office in November determined to end Salisbury's policy of drift, but he had accomplished nothing: he had tried, and failed, to obtain first a German alliance and then a Russian settlement. Meanwhile the position in the Far East was as bad as ever. Something must be done; and a Japanese alliance was his only remaining resource.

According to Hayashi, the first British advance came informally, through MacDonald, who was then in England, on 15 July.[1] He apparently confided to the Minister British fears of a Russo-Japanese combination, and Hayashi never ceased to advise his government to play on these fears. Then, on 22 July, Bertie disposed of the old hope of German assistance in the Far East by observing that Germany would never dare to antagonise Russia.[2] Finally, on 31 July, Lansdowne himself broached the subject of an 'understanding'.[3] Hayashi accepted the principle of an alliance on 14 August,[4] and Lansdowne, with the approval of the King and Cabinet, then asked him to frame some definite proposals.[5]

This insured against the danger of isolation; but Lansdowne was also anxious to insure against the opposite danger of being dragged into war by his new partner. At the very beginning Japan was told firmly that she could expect no British help if she followed a provocative policy. Lansdowne declared to Hayashi on 18 July that the Russian position in Manchuria was exceptional, and, unless she violated Chinese integrity, there could be no objection to her making her own evacuation agreement.[6] He rejected Hayashi's suggestion that the Powers should refuse to recognise separate concessions by China until the indemnity was paid, or that 'most-favoured nation' treatment should at least be given to such concessions. Such a condition would, he replied, be 'too stringent', and he warned plainly that 'under the Anglo-Russian Agreement [of 1899] Russia already had a preferential right to construct railways to the north of the Great Wall. Absolute equality in this

[1] *Secret Memoirs of Count Tadasu Hayashi*, ed. A. M. Pooley, pp. 121–4. Hayashi says that MacDonald came from Salisbury. This is doubtful: Salisbury's attitude to the alliance was later unfriendly (see pp. 60–1), and in 1904 MacDonald himself wrote that Salisbury had been 'rather against' it. MacDonald to Campbell, 18 Feb. 1904. F.O. 46/577.

[2] Memo by Bertie, 22 July 1901. F.O. 46/547.

[3] B.D. II.102. [4] B.D. II.103.

[5] Minute by Edward VII at B.D. II.103; Salisbury to the King, 16 Aug. 1901. Salisbury MSS, Royal Correspondence.

[6] Lansdowne to Whitehead, despatch No. 81, 18 July 1901. F.O. 46/538.

respect was therefore unattainable.'[1] The Russians were told that he hoped to avoid further misunderstandings over Manchuria, and that 'nothing . . . would give me greater pleasure than to confer freely and confidentially with [them] upon this subject'.[2] If a Japanese alliance had to be made, at least the attendant risks could be reduced.

Once begun, however, the negotiations acquired a momentum of their own. The initial decision to take the necessary risks had been a difficult one; but once it was taken, it was easy to forget the dangers, which were remote, and to concentrate on the advantages, which were immediate. 'I am sincerely desirous to make something of the idea', wrote Lansdowne on 4 September.[3] He soon found a powerful ally in Selborne, who welcomed any relief from the strain imposed on the Navy by isolation. A memorandum circulated by Selborne to the Cabinet on 4 September showed that the battleship strength of the principal Powers in the Far East was as follows.

	France	*Britain*	*Russia*	*Japan*
Built	1	4	5	6
Building	—	?	3	1

Britain alone in the Far East would soon be outnumbered by nine battleships to four; and yet it would be impossible to provide reinforcements there at the expense of the forces in European waters. An Anglo-Japanese combination would, by contrast, have a superiority of eleven to nine and might even allow Britain to strengthen her home fleets.[4]

A number of other events in the autumn of 1901 combined to make the Cabinet aware of the dangers of isolation. It was at this time that Hicks Beach had his great conflict with Selborne and Brodrick over the strength of the armed forces.[5] Unless there was a radical change of policy, the choice seemed to lie between indefinitely increasing taxation and a dangerously weak army and navy. Hamilton, still pessimistic, believed that 'we are really in a position almost of impotence as regards the great Continental

[1] Lansdowne to Whitehead, despatch No. 84, 23 July 1901. F.O. 46/538.
[2] Lansdowne to Scott, despatch No. 200, 10 July 1901. F.O. 65/1618.
[3] Lansdowne to MacDonald, 4 Sept, 1901. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xviii.
[4] Z. S. Steiner, 'Great Britain and the creation of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance', *Journal of Modern History*, **31** (1959), pp. 29–31.
[5] See pp. 8–10.

Powers' and detected signs that they were beginning to realise this.[1] Although when the Cabinet came to examine the details of the alliance, their reaction was unfavourable, this feeling of weakness probably created an atmosphere in which the principle was looked at less critically than it might otherwise have been. The feeling that a fundamental change of policy was necessary persisted, and Lansdowne's attempts to effect such a change met with his colleagues' sympathy.

On 3 September MacDonald again saw Hayashi, and, with Lansdowne's approval, the two men agreed to suggest an Alliance which would become operative if either party were attacked by two Powers.[2] This proposal was made officially by Hayashi to Lansdowne on 16 October, and by him accepted as a 'useful basis of discussion'. Lansdowne himself laid stress on what was for him the main object of the alliance—that neither Power should make other agreements on the Far East without consulting its partner.[3] He then drew up a draft agreement which he sent, with Selborne's memorandum, to the Prime Minister, who gave it his general agreement on the 25th.[4] Lansdowne now felt committed to the alliance, both because he had opened detailed negotiations with the Japanese and because, having once taken a difficult decision, he was reluctant to go back on it. But at the same time events were starting once again to impress the opposite dangers upon his mind. In October reports that Russia was again pressing China to conclude a Manchurian convention with her began to circulate, and on the 28th the chargé d'affaires in St Petersburg telegraphed that the Russian Foreign Ministry was hourly expecting news of its signature.[5] This threatened Lansdowne with the confrontation which he hoped to avoid. And to the new alarm in the Far East was added a gathering crisis in Central Asia.

2

The already vulnerable British position in Central Asia suffered two further blows in the autumn of 1901. In October the Ameer

[1] Hamilton to Curzon. 25 Sept. and 2 Oct. 1901. Hamilton MSS, Letters to Curzon, vol. iii.

[2] MacDonald to Lansdowne, 3 Sept., and Lansdowne to MacDonald, 4 Sept. 1901. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xviii.

[3] B.D. II.105.

[4] Lansdowne to Salisbury, 25 Oct. 1901. F.O. 46/547.

[5] C. Hardinge to Lansdowne, telegram No. 108, 28 Oct. 1901. F.O. 65/1625.

Abdurrahman of Afghanistan died. With his successor Habibullah a quite unknown quantity his death put into question the already precarious arrangements for the defence of India against Russia. 'And so the blow has fallen and the great crisis has arrived!' exclaimed the Viceroy when he heard the news.[1]

Even more serious was the position in Persia. British policy there was already in a state of flux, for Lansdowne, a personal friend of Curzon's, was much more ready than Salisbury to listen sympathetically to the Viceroy's suggestions. Soon after Lansdowne became Foreign Secretary, Curzon wrote him a long argumentative letter in which he again pressed the ideas put forward in his 1899 despatch. The British must, he insisted, decide at once 'how far we are going to allow Russian encroachment to the south without resisting it'.[2] Lansdowne in reply doubted the possibility of drawing a line across which Russia should not pass, but invited Curzon to suggest a detailed policy.[3] This drew another long letter from the Viceroy. He proposed to make it clear to the Persians that Britain would not consent to Russian penetration in the south; and that if Persia yielded to Russian pressure, the British would take counter action in the Gulf and 'hold ourselves absolved from our previous undertakings to support her integrity and independence and should both protect and compensate ourselves in whatever way appeared best'.[4]

Curzon was in fact urging a break with the old policy of maintaining Persian independence. Lansdowne, here as elsewhere predisposed to believe in the need for a new departure, agreed generally with him[5] and drew up for presentation at Tehran a despatch closely following his ideas and sometimes even his language. The despatch acknowledged 'the superior interest of Russia in the northern half of the Shah's dominions', but warned the Persians that Britain would not tolerate concessions to her in the south. If such concessions were made,

> H.M.G. would necessarily have to reconsider their policy and they would regard themselves as justified in taking such measures as might appear to them best calculated to protect the interest so endangered,

[1] Ronaldshay, *Lord Curzon*, vol. ii, p. 195.
[2] Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, pp. 230–2.
[3] Lansdowne to Curzon, 5 May 1901. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xxix.
[4] Curzon to Lansdowne, 15 June 1901. Ibid.
[5] Lansdowne to Curzon, 15 Aug. 1901. Ibid.

even though in the adoption of such measures it might no longer be possible to make the integrity and independence of Persia their first object as hitherto.[1]

But before this despatch could be presented a new crisis arose. The Russian loan of 1900 had already been spent and the Persian government was anxious to borrow more money. Britain was precluded from giving direct help by the Russian loan contract, but Sir Arthur Hardinge, the Minister at Tehran, had evolved a scheme by which the money could be lent through the Imperial Bank of Persia, British-controlled but nominally a Persian institution. He urged this course upon the government persistently and vehemently, warning them that refusal of the money 'will be regarded here as abdication of our interests in Persia'.[2] Curzon took the same view, but whereas Hardinge wanted to give the money without conditions to strengthen Persia, Curzon wanted to use a loan to force concessions in the south.[3]

Lansdowne also wished to find the money,[4] but he was defeated by those in charge of the finances. The Treasury, as he wrote later, 'met us with an absolute *non possumus*'.[5] Hicks Beach objected to working through the Imperial Bank, whose financial reputation was low, and believed that 'commercially, Russian advances to Persia have, so far, done us good rather than harm'.[6] The only other possible source of money was the Indian Exchequer, and although Curzon was ready to lend the India Council in London withheld their consent, which was constitutionally necessary. They were firmly supported by Hamilton, who told Curzon that the advance being pressed by Hardinge would be 'a mere stop-gap' which 'will tend by its postponement to aggravate the ultimate difficulty'.[7]

The refusal of Hicks Beach and Hamilton meant that those who controlled the financial resources of the Empire were no longer prepared to spend money merely to keep Persia in being; and so,

[1] B.D. IV.321 (a).
[2] Sir A. Hardinge to Lansdowne, telegram, private, 9 Oct. 1901. F.O. 60/645.
[3] Curzon to Hamilton, telegram, private, 3 Oct. 1901. Ibid.
[4] Lansdowne to Salisbury, 4 Oct. 1901. Salisbury MSS, Lansdowne Correspondence.
[5] Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 233.
[6] Memo by Hicks Beach, 12 Oct. 1901. F.O. Memoranda, F.O. 60.
[7] Hamilton to Curzon, 23 Oct. 1901. Hamilton MSS, Letters to Curzon, vol. iii.

much as Curzon and Lansdowne deplored these decisions at the time, the larger policy which they had already worked out received a powerful impetus. Immediately, however, Lansdowne was faced with a difficult problem, for if Russia lent the money she would tighten her hold on Persia still further. Hardinge suggested on 12 October that one way out might be found in a friendly arrangement with Russia,[1] and his idea was at once taken up by Bertie, who proposed a joint Anglo-Russian loan, Britain having her security in the south and Russia hers in the north.[2] The plan thus forced upon Lansdowne by immediate needs was consistent with the long-term policy which he and Curzon had combined to produce. They had agreed that Britain's main interest should be not the support of Persia but the preservation of her own interests in the south, and they had acknowledged that Russia already held a preponderating influence in the north. It was therefore easy for Lansdowne to adopt the plan pressed on him by Hardinge and Bertie, and on 15 October he wrote to the Prime Minister advocating Bertie's device of a joint loan with separate securities. It would, he asserted, satisfy Hardinge and Curzon and overcome the objection of the India Council to working through the Imperial Bank. At the same time, 'we should obtain a substantial recognition of our claims to consideration in respect of the tariff, the Southern Ports and Seistan'.[3]

Salisbury was sceptical. 'I am not in favour of making any offer to Russia', he replied. 'She will pretend to consider it—will waste time in colourable negotiations—and when she has arranged matters to her liking will decline any cooperation with us.' He favoured instead a definite statement that 'under all the circumstances of the case, Great Britain cannot acquiesce in the establishment by any other Power of a fiscal control over the Persian Gulf'.[4]

Lansdowne recognised the justice of Salisbury's criticisms, and, partly to meet them and partly to set his own doubts at rest, he began to argue that even if a rebuff were received some advantage would result. On the 25th he told his colleagues:

[1] Sir A. Hardinge to Lansdowne, telegram No. 61, 12 Oct. 1901. F.O. 60/645.
[2] Memo by Bertie, 12 Oct. 1901. Ibid.
[3] Lansdowne to Salisbury, 15 Oct. 1901. Salisbury MSS, Lansdowne Correspondence.
[4] Salisbury to Lansdowne, 18 Oct. 1901. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xix. The first quotation is printed in Z. S. Steiner, 'Great Britain and the . . . Anglo-Japanese Alliance', p. 35.

It is, I am afraid, more than likely that our overture will be declined by Russia but it may be of assistance to us hereafter to be able to appeal to the fact that we have made it, and the refusal of Russia would leave us with a comparatively free hand to make an arrangement of our own with the Persian Government.[1]

Hamilton and Sanderson repeated these arguments,[2] and Lansdowne did later use the Russian refusal to prove the need for effective British action. But there is nothing to show that the only virtue of the scheme for him lay in its likely rejection.[3] Probably his motives were mixed: an agreement with Russia, small though the chances of attaining it might be, was well worth trying for; and even if the attempt failed, its failure would clear the air.

It was natural to accompany a Persian settlement by another in the Far East. On 19 October Lansdowne drew up a telegram of protest at the reported Russo-Chinese draft treaty for the Yangtze Viceroys, always Britain's closest allies in the Chinese government. But then he suddenly cancelled it.[4] In its place he suggested to the Cabinet on 25 October that he should make another attempt to reach a direct understanding with Russia. This was on the same day that he circulated his memorandum on Persia, and he told his colleagues that he hoped to show that 'we think it better to negotiate . . . directly with the Russian Government rather than with the two weak and dishonest governments which in each case stand between us and Russia'. As in the case of Persia, even failure would have its advantages.

> In neither case would a refusal on the part of Russia do us much harm; while in both cases our position would, I believe, be strengthened, especially with the public here, by the fact that we had made proposals of the kind.[5]

As with his Persian proposals, acceptance would solve his problems, rejection would clear the air. The renewed crisis over Manchuria had again brought to the surface all his doubts about

[1] Memo by Lansdowne, 25 Oct. 1901. F.O. Memoranda, F.O. 60.
[2] Hamilton to Curzon, 23 Oct. 1901. Hamilton MSS, Letters to Curzon, vol. iii; Sanderson to C. Hardinge, 6 Nov. 1901. C. Hardinge MSS, vol. iii.
[3] To increase the admittedly small chance of acceptance, Bertie advised that it was 'desirable not to rub her [Russia] up the wrong way' in Manchuria (memo of 31 Oct. 1901. F.O. 46/547) and that Charles Hardinge and not Scott should conduct the negotiations at St Petersburg (Bertie to C. Hardinge, 6 Nov. 1901. Hardinge MSS, vol. iii).
[4] Draft telegram to Satow, 19 Oct. 1901, and minute by Lansdowne. F.O. 17/1510.
[5] Memo by Lansdowne, 25 Oct. 1901. F.O. 17/1510.

the Japanese alliance; but now that he had gone so deeply into it he was unwilling to withdraw. He sent his draft treaty to Salisbury for approval on the 25th, the same day that he circulated his Russian proposals to the Cabinet.[1] A Russian settlement and a Japanese alliance were the perfect combination: the one would provide against the danger of war, the other against the danger of isolation. If the Russians were ready to strike a bargain, the Japanese alliance would lose its perils but retain its advantages; if, as was more likely, they refused, then at least hostile criticism of the alliance would be disarmed—and perhaps also Lansdowne's own doubts would be finally resolved.

The Cabinet approved this policy on the 28th,[2] and on the next day Lansdowne approached de Staal, the Russian Ambassador. He expressed his desire 'to deal frankly and directly with the government of Russia in regard to matters which were of interest to both Powers', and specifically mentioned China and Persia. In Persia, he declared, Britain would not oppose a purely commercial Russian outlet on the Gulf. De Staal's reply was friendly. He agreed that in such cases Britain and Russia should deal directly with each other and expressed himself 'in very uncomplimentary terms of Eastern governments in general'.[3] But the *rapprochement* got no further than an exchange of amicable sentiments. On the 29th Lamsdorff refused to communicate the draft Russo-Chinese Convention until it was actually signed,[4] and on 2 November he stated that the Russo-Persian loan negotiations had already been completed.[5] 'It is quite certain', concluded Charles Hardinge, 'that M. de Witte [then Russian Finance Minister] will not entertain Your Lordship's proposal.'[6]

In the Far East chance now intervened to prevent the development of a crisis. On 7 November Li Hung-Chang, the able pro-Russian negotiator upon whom the Russians were relying for a convention, died, and for several months the Russo-Chinese negotiations remained at deadlock. In Persia the sequel was much as Lansdowne had foreseen. A further Russian loan was (after some

[1] Lansdowne to Salisbury, 25 Oct. 1901. F.O. 46/547.
[2] Salisbury to the King, 29 Oct. 1901. Salisbury MSS, Royal Correspondence.
[3] Lansdowne to C. Hardinge, despatches Nos. 287, 288, 29 Oct. 1901. F.O. 65/1618.
[4] C. Hardinge to Lansdowne, telegram No. 111, 29 Oct. 1901. F.O. 65/1625.
[5] C. Hardinge to Lansdowne, telegram No. 114, 2 Nov. 1901. F.O. 60/645.
[6] C. Hardinge to Lansdowne, telegram No. 115, 3 Nov. 1901. Ibid.

delay) arranged, but not until the British had demonstrated their continuing interest by an offer of their own. This came from Indian funds and was sanctioned by the India Council as a result, so Lansdowne said, of Russian obduracy.[1] Even more satisfactory for Lansdowne was the fact that they imposed a condition that Persia should undertake that concessions granted to Britain in the south should not be less than those granted to other Powers elsewhere.[2] In July they had rejected a suggestion by Lansdowne that a loan could be based upon a security in Seistan on the grounds that it would infringe Persian integrity[3]; now events had driven them in the direction Lansdowne wished them to go. Then, on 28 November, the Grand Vizier told Hardinge that Russia had vetoed a British loan.[4] This seemed the final proof that Persia was a Russian puppet, and that it would be folly for Britain to continue to support her; as Lansdowne declared, 'when . . . the Persian Government refused assistance from us under orders from Russia there could be no doubt as to the propriety of speaking our mind'.[5] On 6 January the despatch which he and Curzon had drawn up in the summer was at last presented.[6]

3

The failure of his approach to Russia had finally satisfied Lansdowne of the need for an alliance with Japan. During the following weeks he became its anxious advocate as events played upon his fears that the Japanese would make a separate agreement with Russia. From MacDonald he learned that the pro-Russian party was influential[7] and that the Japanese generally were 'beginning to be alarmed at the magnitude of their new departure'.[8] His anxiety became acute when at the end of the year Ito, an elder statesman and the leader of the pro-Russian party, visited Paris and St Petersburg. Hardinge reported that in Russia he was being received with 'unusual distinction',[9] and Scott that the Russians

[1] Lansdowne to Sir A. Hardinge, 19 Nov. 1901. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xxi.
[2] Lansdowne to Sir A. Hardinge, telegram No. 50, 6 Nov. 1901. F.O. 60/645.
[3] Sir A. Hardinge to Lansdowne, telegram No. 36, 13 July 1901, and minutes by Lyall and Hamilton. F.O. 60/645.
[4] Sir A. Hardinge to Lansdowne, telegram No. 80, 28 Nov. 1901. Ibid.
[5] Lansdowne to Curzon, 16 Feb. 1902. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xxix.
[6] B.D. IV.321 (a).
[7] MacDonald to Lansdowne, 31 Oct. 1901. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xviii.
[8] MacDonald to Lansdowne, 27 Nov. 1901. Ibid.
[9] C. Hardinge to Lansdowne, telegram No. 120, 30 Nov. 1901. F.O. 65/1625.

were seeking to arrange a general settlement with him.[1] Lansdowne's original attitude to the alliance was transformed.

Meanwhile, he was trying by careful drafting to guard against the opposite danger of being dragged into war with Russia. His counterdraft presented to Hayashi on 6 November, after being approved by a 'large majority' of the Cabinet,[2] attempted to limit Japan's pretensions in Korea. There was no recognition of her preponderance there, nor of her right to take steps to safeguard that preponderance—only a statement in the preamble that both Powers were 'specially interested in preventing the absorption of Corea by any foreign Power'.[3] Hayashi at once pointed out these omissions, but did not return to the subject again for some weeks. While he waited for an answer, Lansdowne watched Ito's progress through Europe with mounting anxiety and on the 20th asked MacDonald if it was connected with the long delay.[4] Both he and Bertie complained to Hayashi himself,[5] and assurances from Komura, the Japanese Foreign Minister, were received with scepticism.[6]

The Japanese counterdraft was not presented until 12 December. It made two highly unwelcome additions to the British draft. Britain was now to recognise Japan's right to take suitable measure to protect her 'preponderating interests' in Korea, and each partner was to maintain in the Far East naval forces superior to those of any other Power.[7] The first provision revived British fears of being dragged into war over some trivial Japanese quarrel in Korea, the second undermined Selborne's naval arguments for the alliance. Before he went to the Cabinet, Lansdowne tried to persuade Hayashi to modify at least the first, but all he could get was a memorandum promising simply that Japan would not act aggressively in Korea.[8] Fortified only by this, Lansdowne on 19 December attended a Cabinet at which the projected alliance met with heavy criticism. The Ministers decided that an alliance 'would not repay us' for the sacrifice of the free disposal of the

[1] Scott to Lansdowne, despatch No. 361, 24 Dec. 1901. F.O. 65/1623.
[2] Salisbury to the King, 5 Nov. 1901. Salisbury MSS, Royal Correspondence.
[3] B.D. II, p. 115. *Memoirs of . . . Hayashi*, p. 134.
[4] Lansdowne to MacDonald, telegram, private, 20 Nov. 1901. F.O. 46/563.
[5] *Memoirs of . . . Hayashi*, p. 145–7.
[6] Minute by Lansdowne on MacDonald to Lansdowne, telegram No. 57, 25 Nov. 1901. F.O. 46/563.
[7] B.D. II.115, pp. 115–20.
[8] *Memoirs of . . . Hayashi*, pp. 168–9.

fleet, and, believing that the terms offered by Japan were 'hardly equivalent' to the guarantee she was receiving, they insisted that an attempt should be made to extend it to cover India and Siam.[1] Lansdowne raised these two points, and that dealing with Japan's freedom of action in Korea, in an interview with Hayashi on that same evening.[2] On the 31st Hayashi offered to include in the treaty the statement that Japan had no aggressive intentions in Korea and to qualify Britain's naval obligations in the Far East by the words 'as far as possible'.[3] No satisfaction was offered about the scope of the alliance. Lansdowne, his thoughts upon Ito's negotiations in Russia, wanted to close at once upon these terms,[4] and when Salisbury insisted that the Cabinet must be consulted, confessed that he was 'dismayed' at the delay which would result.[5] But Salisbury's instructions had to be accepted, and on 1 January Lansdowne addressed a memorandum to his colleagues, arguing that the Japanese offer should be accepted as it stood. Better terms could not be obtained: the Japanese would 'certainly' not enlarge the scope of the agreement; and the recognition of their preponderance in Korea was to them 'the essence of the bargain'. If they could involve Britain in war by pursuing a forward policy in Korea, so could Britain involve them in war by pursuing such a policy in the Yangtze.[6]

One of the most remarkable features of the Japanese alliance is the dislike shown for it by the British Cabinet. Balfour had already told Lansdowne how much he would have preferred British entry into the Triple Alliance.[7] Even if no better alternative had offered itself, he would still have felt misgivings about the alliance. 'We may find ourselves fighting for our own existence in every part of the globe against Russia and France because France has joined forces with her ally over some obscure Russo-Japanese quarrel in Corea.'[8] Ritchie, the Home Secretary and later Chancellor of the Exchequer in Balfour's Cabinet, made the same objection with great force, but finally admitted that he would not push his doubts

[1] Salisbury to the King, 19 Dec. 1901. Salisbury MSS, Royal Correspondence.
[2] B.D. II.117. [3] B.D. II.119, pp. 115–20.
[4] Lansdowne to Salisbury, 31 Dec. 1901. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xviii.
[5] Lansdowne to Salisbury, 1 Jan. 1902. Salisbury MSS, Lansdowne Correspondence.
[6] Memo by Lansdowne, 1 Jan. 1902. Salisbury MSS, Cabinet Memoranda, Foreign and Imperial.
[7] See pp. 63–5.
[8] Balfour to Lansdowne, 12 Dec. 1901. Balfour MSS, Add. MSS 49727.

to the point of complete opposition and would accept the treaty if his colleagues were agreed upon it.[1]

It is apparent that it was only this reservation on the part of most of Lansdowne's colleagues which saved the treaty. None liked it, but all were prepared, with some misgiving, to accept it if Lansdowne insisted. This was Chamberlain's attitude. He was anxious to include a definite reference to British interests in the Yangtze valley and even drew up a draft with this addition,[2] but he was ready if necessary to accept the treaty as it stood.[3] Hicks Beach also wanted to include some reference to British interests in the Yangtze. It would, he claimed, make the treaty more equitable and gain greater acceptance for it in the country; the only way to overcome German opposition to this would be to include some reference to the Anglo-Russian railway agreement of 1899. 'I do not myself think', he told Lansdowne, 'that we gain enough from the treaty to outweigh the obvious objections to it.' But Hicks Beach too qualified his opposition by saying that 'if there is any good to be got from this treaty at all, it is that the Japanese navy would, in certain eventualities, lessen the demands on our navy in war'.[4] Knowledge of the weakness and strain on resources caused by isolation had blunted Hicks Beach's criticism. Selborne, whose memorandum had helped to impress this upon the Cabinet, had however been antagonised by Japan's naval demands. The Cabinet had decided that in their original form they were unacceptable, but the Japanese had then offered to qualify them with the phrase 'as far as possible'. With this addition, Selborne was prepared, though reluctantly, to accept them, 'remembering', as

[1] Ritchie to Lansdowne, 4 Jan, 1902. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xviii. Ritchie's exact words were: 'I confess I feel very unhappy about the Japanese Treaty. It binds us hand and foot to take up any quarrel which Japan may fasten on Russia if France comes to her aid. It matters not how trivial the "casus belli" may be or however wrong Japan may be. Japan's main interest is in Corea. We have interests in every part of the globe, and whereas Japan would only have to meet Russia and France in the Far East we should have to meet them all over the world—and probably in a quarrel with regard to which we had not been consulted and with which we were not in sympathy.'

[2] Chamberlain's formula runs as follows (with his suggested additions italicised): 'The Japanese Government have however called the attention of H.M.G. to the special interests political as well as commercial possessed by Japan in Korea *and H.M.G. have similarly called attention to the special interests of Great Britain in the Yangtze Valley* and *both* countries recognize that if their interests should be threatened it would be admissible *for either* to take such measures as may be indispensable *in their respective cases* to safeguard them.'

[3] Chamberlain to Lansdowne, 5 Jan. 1902. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xviii.

[4] Hicks Beach to Lansdowne, 2 Jan. 1902. Ibid.

he said, 'that the Agreement is only for five years'. He insisted, moreover, that the provision should be interpreted to apply, not to the number of battleships, but to the aggregate tonnage of all ships of all classes—a standard he described as 'worthless' but temporarily convenient for Britain.[1] The only other Minister, apart from Salisbury, whose opinion survives is Hamilton. He feared that Russia, thwarted in the Far East, would turn her energies to Central Asia, and gloomily predicted that, as a result of the alliance, that area would see a Russian *coup* before the end of 1902.[2]

The fate of the treaty lay in Salisbury's hands. Had he given a firm lead and rejected the Japanese alliance as decisively as he had rejected the German the already doubtful Cabinet would have followed him. 'Our colleagues', wrote Lansdowne to him on 31 December, 'were content to leave the settlement of this matter to your decision.'[3] But he had already approved Lansdowne's first draft on 25 October, and he now stopped just short of complete condemnation of the treaty. He asserted that the provisions introduced by the Japanese during December were unacceptable, and while he addressed his remarks only to these his language showed that he felt dislike and suspicion for the general idea of the alliance. The naval demands of the Japanese were, he wrote, 'entirely novel' and 'may hamper us greatly if we have need for the use of our forces in some other service with which it may be Japan is not connected'. Their refusal to extend the scope of the alliance 'deprives us at all events of a plausible defence for the great dangers and costs we are running for the sake of Japan'. But he fixed his main criticism upon the refusal of Japan to limit her freedom of action in Korea. Hayashi's declaration that Japanese policy would be non-aggressive he swept aside as 'a sentiment; not a stipulation'; and in effect he vetoed the alliance unless some firmer safeguard was introduced.

If that is their last word, the prospect held out by the agreement in that form is somewhat disquieting. It involves a pledge on our part to defend Japanese action in Corea and in all China against France and Russia no matter what the 'casus belli' may be. There is no limit; and no escape.

[1] Selborne to Lansdowne, 2 Jan. and 7 Jan. 1902. Ibid.
[2] Hamilton to Curzon, 13 Feb. and 20 Feb. 1902. Hamilton MSS, Curzon Correspondence, vol. iv.
[3] Lansdowne to Salisbury, 31 Dec. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xviii.

We are pledged to war though the conduct of our ally may have been followed in spite of our strongest remonstrances, and may be avowedly regarded by us with clear disapprobation. I feel sure that such a pledge will not be sanctioned by Parliament and I think that in the interests of the Empire it ought not to be taken.

He concluded with a characteristic warning against 'surrendering without reserve into the hands of another Power the right of deciding whether we shall or shall not stake the resources of the Empire on the issue of a mighty conflict. . . . Japan is, like ourselves, a Parliamentary country; and, like ourselves, is liable to have the policy of the Empire, on the most vital questions, reversed by the issue of a night's division.'[1]

Lansdowne was forced by the hostility of the Cabinet to demand changes in the treaty when on 14 January he next saw Hayashi. To meet Salisbury's requirements he insisted that Britain could only recognise Japan's right to take action in Korea if she was threatened 'by the aggressive action of another Power', and to meet a wish generally expressed he demanded that Britain should have a similar right to take action in China. To satisfy Selborne, the naval provision became not a binding engagement but a simple statement of intention.[2] When Hayashi on the 18th replied that Japan's interests in Korea could not be put on the same footing as Britain's in China and omitted the limitation upon the *casus foederis*, Lansdowne's answer was emphatic. He told the Minister that 'there was a good deal of apprehension in our minds that Japan, in consequence of her close proximity to Corea and her intense nervousness with regard to Russian intrusion in that country, might involve herself in a quarrel with Russia upon some insufficient pretext, and we desired to put it beyond all question that the *casus foederis* could not arise except where the third Power was clearly the assailant'.[3] After this unequivocal language, the British carried their point, but had to give way to the Japanese contention that the interests of the two countries in China and Korea could not be given equal weight. The final text, while recognising British interests in China, admitted that Japan was interested 'in a peculiar degree' in Korea; but it laid down that Japanese

[1] Memo by Salisbury, 7 Jan. 1902. Salisbury MSS, Cabinet Memoranda, Foreign and Imperial.
[2] B.D. II.121, pp. 115–20.
[3] B.D. II.122.

action in either country would only be protected by the alliance if it followed aggression by another Power or was caused by civil disorder. The rest of the treaty followed generally accepted lines: it was to last for five years and to become operative when either party was involved in war, in defence of its interests in China or Korea, with two other Powers; neither could, without consultation, enter separate arrangements affecting its partner's interests; and the naval provision remained, as the British had wished, a mere statement of intention.[1] The treaty was finally signed on 30 January.

The Japanese Alliance is a landmark in British policy because it was the first departure from the traditional policy of isolation. It was, moreover, to prove highly successful. Yet looked at from the viewpoint of the time it is much less impressive: Lansdowne had been forced into it to avoid isolation in the Far East, and had then in his turn forced it upon a reluctant Cabinet. He had done nothing to avert the dangers which he had seen so clearly in March and April. The Far East during 1902 was deceptively quiet, but the perils were still there, waiting to come into the open. What if Balfour should prove the better prophet and Britain should be in danger of 'fighting for [her] existence in every part of the globe because France has joined forces with her ally over some obscure Russo-Japanese quarrel in Corea'?

4

In August Lansdowne had promised Lascelles that he would again take up the question of an alliance with Germany in the autumn. But Anglo-German relations, uneasy even then, had since grown rapidly worse. On 25 October Chamberlain, speaking at Edinburgh, had replied to Continental attacks on British tactics in the Boer War by asserting that other armies, including the German in 1870, had behaved in a worse manner. The immediate press outburst in Germany was answered in kind by the British press and the campaign of charge and counter-charge continued throughout the winter. It began to affect the Cabinet: Hamilton, a member of its pro-German section, concluded that although 'we have treated them extraordinarily well . . . they seem to be more hostile

[1] B.D. II, pp. 115–20.

to us even than Frenchmen or Russians'.[1] He still wanted an alliance if it could be obtained on terms of equality, but he admitted that he was increasingly impressed by evidence of German antipathy towards Britain.[2] But perhaps the most important effect of the press warfare was upon Chamberlain himself. Always proud and impetuous, he was quick to resent German attacks, and by January was violently anti-German in his language.[3]

Another new development was the beginning of anxiety about the German fleet. It was only a beginning: Selborne continued to base his programme for naval construction upon the possibility of war with the Dual Alliance only. The first result of the growth of the German fleet might even have been to make a German alliance more valuable in Selborne's eyes: Germany would, he told the Cabinet, be 'in a commanding position if ever we find ourselves at war with France and Russia'. But he also believed that 'the Emperor seems determined that the power of Germany shall be used all over the world to push German commerce, possessions and interests'.[4]

The most important change which had taken place during the summer was however that Lansdowne had embarked upon the policy of alliance with Japan There was no longer any urgent need for assistance from Germany in the Far East, as Bertie seems to have recognised clearly.[5] Even the choice between Germany and Japan was not made consciously; rather, Lansdowne had been forced to make an alliance with Japan which, by strengthening his position in the Far East, had removed the main impetus behind the movement to Germany. The only member of the Cabinet to recognise, and deplore, the choice which had been made was Balfour. In a remarkable letter to Lansdowne on 12 December he argued that the conclusion of an alliance with Japan would rob Britain of her main pretext for rejecting German overtures—that, as a parliamentary country, she could not commit herself in advance. A German alliance was better because 'the Japanese Treaty, if it ends in war, brings us into collision with the same opponents as a

[1] Hamilton to Curzon, 22 Nov. 1901. Hamilton MSS, Curzon Correspondence, vol. iii.
[2] Hamilton to Curzon, 29 Nov. 1901. Ibid.
[3] See p. 68.
[4] Cabinet memo by Selborne, 16 Nov. 1901. Selborne Memoranda.
[5] J. M. Goudswaard, *Some Aspects of the End of Britain's 'Splendid Isolation'*, pp. 82–3.

German alliance, but with a much weaker partner'. Were the interests protected by the Japanese Alliance more important than those which would be protected by the Triple Alliance?

I cannot think so. By the Japanese Treaty the only admitted causes of quarrel are confined to the Eastern seas. Our interests there (including our interest in preserving Japan) are of course important but they are not vital; and while Japan will have a right, in certain contingencies, to call upon us to go to war with France and Russia in a matter which may though indifferent to us be a matter of life and death to her, we have, from the nature of the case, no corresponding privileges. I do not think that this is the case with regard to war in which the Triple Alliance was involved. It is a matter of supreme moment to us that Italy should not be crushed, that Austria should not be dismembered and, as I think, that Germany should not be squeezed to death between the hammer of Russia and the anvil of France.

If therefore we had to fight for the Central European Powers, we should be fighting for our own interests, and for those of civilization, to an extent which cannot be alleged with regard to Japan.

But take the other side of the compact. The weakest spot in the Empire is probably the Indian frontier. In a war with Russia our military resources would be strained to the utmost to protect it, and while the progress of events strengthens the position of Russia for aggressive purposes in this part of the world, no corresponding gain is possible on the side of defence. A quarrel with Russia anywhere, about anything, means the invasion of India and, if England were without allies, I doubt whether it would be possible for the French to resist joining in the fray. Our position would then be perilous.

The Japanese Alliance, from its very terms, would, in such a case, be useless, and we should have no right to call upon anybody else. Not so if we were joined by the Triple Alliance. The very fact that they would be bound to join us would probably prevent France throwing in her lot with Russia. If not, they would be efficient allies.

I conclude therefore that the dangers are less and the gains are greater from joining the Triple Alliance than would follow from pursuing a similar course with regard to Japan.[1]

Balfour's subtle and ingenious argument, with its complete rejection of isolation, is the reply to his uncle's famous memorandum of the previous May. He wanted the general security which only a general alliance could provide. He attached less importance than

[1] Balfour to Lansdowne, 12 Dec. 1901. Balfour MSS, Add. MSS 49727.

Lansdowne to the Far East, and more to India, and showed a concern for Europe which was rare among British statesmen at the time.

But Balfour was alone in using such arguments. From the Foreign Office Lansdowne met, as before, with opposition to any closer ties with Germany. A memorandum by Bertie repeated that Germany would never act against Russia in the Far East and rehearsed the grievances which Britain had accumulated over the past year. But he also employed two novel arguments of great importance. Germany now intended to become 'a great naval Power', and in many parts of the world her interests and those of Britain would be 'irreconcilable'; and Britain was in a position of great strength as *tertius gaudens* between the two great alliances. There was a new confidence in Bertie's memorandum, generated in part no doubt by Japan's acceptance of British advances, and with it, not simply opposition to a German alliance, but real dislike of the Germans.[1]

Bertie was supported by Cranborne, Salisbury's son and the Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office. Like Bertie, he dwelt on the prevalent Anglophobia in Germany and, again like him, showed a novel confidence in Britain's international position. Britain, he claimed, could always rely on the divisions among the other Powers to prevent the formation of a coalition against her. Germany would in any case have to come to her help if she were attacked by France and Russia, and an alliance with her would only mean that 'the maintenance of German friendship would have become so important to us that it must hamper us in our attitude to everyone else'.[2]

Lansdowne did not go as far as Bertie and Cranborne. Unlike Salisbury, he no longer had any faith in the principle of isolation. 'We may push too far the argument that, because we have in the past survived in spite of our isolation, we need have no misgivings as to the effect of that isolation in the future.'[3] But he now at last decided that a general alliance was too high a price to pay to escape from isolation. He defended the Japanese Alliance against Balfour's onslaught with the argument that 'the chances of the

[1] B.D. II.91.
[2] Memorandum by Cranborne, 18 Nov. 1901. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xii.
[3] B.D. II.92.

"casus foederis" arising are much fewer in the case of the Anglo-Japanese agreement than they would be in that of an Anglo-German agreement. The area of entanglement seems to me much more restricted under the former'.[1] In a memorandum in November he listed five objections to a German alliance which he regarded as 'virtually insuperable': the difficulties of definition; the certainty of alienating France and Russia; the possible disapproval of the Colonies; the risk of being entangled in a policy hostile to the United States[2]; and the possibility of opposition in Parliament.[3] Lansdowne's objections to the general character of the proposed alliance were consistent from beginning to end, although it was not until November that he could bring himself to regard them as conclusive. By then he was within sight of a limited agreement to relieve pressure where it was greatest. He had postponed a decision until circumstances made it for him.

On the other hand, unlike Bertie and Cranborne, he still hoped to work closely with Germany and in particular hankered after some form of agreement with her. He therefore proposed that the two countries should conclude a series of agreements which would not commit them to definite action but would declare the identity of their interests in certain limited areas of the world.[4] They could declare their intention to preserve the territorial status quo on the shores of the Mediterranean, Adriatic, Aegean, and Black Seas, and the Persian Gulf. He even dwelt on the benefit which would accrue to Britain in Morocco.[5] But the plan was criticised by Salisbury[6] and rejected 'unhesitatingly' by Metternich, the new German Ambassador. Metternich told Lansdowne plainly on 19 December that for Germany 'it was a case of "the whole or none"'.[7] Lansdowne had hoped to avoid this choice, but had already decided what his answer should be if it was forced upon him. The project of a German alliance was never revived.

[1] Lansdowne to Balfour, 12 Dec. 1901. Balfour MSS, Add. MSS 49727.
[2] Cranborne thought that the Kaiser's anti-American prejudices were alone 'sufficient to condemn the policy as far as we are concerned'. Memo of 18 Nov. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xii.
[3] B.D. II.92. [4] Ibid. [5] B.D. II.93.
[6] Minute by Salisbury. Ibid. [7] B.D. II.94.

4

British Diplomacy in 1902

1

The New Year opened with renewed recriminations, both public and private, between Britain and Germany. On 3 January Holstein, in a letter to Chirol, the Foreign Editor of *The Times*, stirred up the already painful memories of 1901 once again. He alleged that Lansdowne had needlessly recurred to the alliance negotiations in December in order to administer a deliberate rebuff and incidentally accused Salisbury of waiting for a European war.[1] This letter, going once again over issues about which the British felt that it was they who had the grievances, fostered their growing belief that the Germans were erratic and grasping. Sanderson considered Holstein to be 'very dangerous',[2] and even Lansdowne admitted that he was 'extremely suspicious' of his influence.[3]

These private recriminations were lost in a sudden flaring of the press warfare between the two countries. In a speech at Birmingham on 6 January Chamberlain rejected Continental criticism of his Edinburgh speech and glorified the virtues of Splendid Isolation. This provoked the Germans, and on the 10th a deputy in the Reichstag called the British Army 'a pack of thieves and brigands'. Bülow's rebuke was only mild, and the British press, led by *The Times*, attacked Germany fiercely. Their indignation was shared by Edward VII, who decided to cancel a visit which the Prince of Wales had already arranged to pay to Berlin. This action threatened to produce a crisis, for the Kaiser declared that cancellation of his cousin's visit would be a 'terrible slap in the face' and even spoke of recalling Metternich[4]; but a protest to the

[1] B.D. II.96.
[2] Sanderson to Lascelles, 15 Jan. 1902. Lascelles MSS, vol. iii, Part 2.
[3] Lansdowne to Lascelles, 24 Feb. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xiii.
[4] Lascelles to Lansdowne, despatch No. 17, 24 Jan. 1902. F.O. 64/1551.

King by Lascelles only drew upon his head the royal displeasure for the mildness of his reaction to the Reichstag debate.[1] Once again Lansdowne stepped in to prevent a deterioration of Anglo-German relations. He was not, he told Lascelles, 'much disposed to pay attention to these little exhibitions of ill-humour' on the part of the Germans, and he successfully brought pressure on the King to allow the visit to go forward as planned.[2]

British official opinion was now becoming more and more anti-German. The lead was taken by Chamberlain, who had now altogether abandoned the policy he had pressed upon the Cabinet in 1900. Warnings from Metternich that Britain might find herself isolated in the Mediterranean drew the comment that 'this seems to be the usual German bluff. . . . Perhaps Count Metternich's fears for British interests in the Mediterranean are to lead to a partition proposal giving ports, etc, in Morocco to Germans'.[3] German intrigues at Lisbon, as reported by Bertie, were 'characteristic' and required the use of 'strong language': 'the Teuton is a good hand at bluff but our people can stand no nonsense'.[4] Cambon once explained that Chamberlain was 'l'orgueil incarné'[5]; and no doubt his hurt pride was the main reason for his sudden Germanophobia. But it also reflected a general movement away from Germany as a result of the accumulated tension and resentments of the previous year. Hamilton, another member of the old pro-German section of the Cabinet, applauded Chamberlain's Birmingham speech as 'singularly well done' and told Curzon that he was 'coming round to the belief that they [the Germans] are a detestable race and that the more we kick them the better friends we shall be'.[6]

Even more significantly, the public hostility between the two countries produced doubt at the Admiralty about the wisdom of the policy of measuring the requirements of the fleet against the needs of war with Russia and France only. Selborne admitted to Balfour on 4 April that when he had drawn up his memoranda of the previous autumn, he had 'not then realized the intensity of the

[1] Lascelles to Knollys, 17 Jan. 1902. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xiii.
[2] Lansdowne to Lascelles, 17 Jan. and 22 Jan. 1902. Ibid.
[3] Chamberlain to Bertie, Jan. 1902 (no day). Bertie MSS. Series A.
[4] Chamberlain to Bertie, 16 Jan. 1902. Ibid.
[5] Paul Cambon, *Correspondance, 1870–1924*, vol. ii, p. 95.
[6] Hamilton to Curzon, 16 Jan. 1902. Hamilton MSS, Letters to Curzon, vol. iv.

hatred of the German nation to this country'.[1] A few days later he sent four questions on German naval policy to Lascelles. He asked if it was safe to build against Russia and France alone, with nothing in hand to meet Germany; if German naval development was directed against England; what the attitude of the German government and people would be if England were involved in war with the Dual Alliance; and what German policy towards Holland and the Dutch Navy was.[2] Lascelles answered that it would be best if the navy were superior to every possible combination but that, since this could not be so, it must be a little larger than the combined fleets of the next two naval Powers. Germany would remain aloof from a war between England and the Dual Alliance and would like to see all three combatants weakened, although she could not tolerate too great an increase in the strength of France and Russia. On the last point, Lascelles was sure that the Dutch would maintain their independence but admitted that a large party in Germany would like to absorb Holland and her colonies. Selborne's most important question—that of whether the German Navy was being built against the English—Lascelles at first answered in the negative; but in a postscript he added that a conversation with Ewart, the Naval Attaché, had convinced him that 'the German Navy is professedly aimed at that of the greatest naval Power—us'.[3]

This change of attitude did not, however, mean that there was as yet any strong desire for an anti-German combination with the Dual Alliance. There is no reliable evidence that Chamberlain's thoughts turned in this direction until the end of the year,[4] and Selborne Hill thought the Navy must build to stay ahead of France and Russia.[5] Lansdowne was still anxious to remain as close as he could to the Germans. Unlike Selborne, he attached little significance to the outburst of anti-British feeling in Germany: it was probably a result of the Boer War, and if the German government had considered it likely to be permanent they would not have contemplated, as they had, a British alliance. He therefore expected an improvement in relations between the two nations. Moreover,

[1] Selborne to Balfour, 4 April 1902. Balfour MSS, Add. MSS 49707.
[2] Enclosure by Selborne in Lansdowne to Lascelles, 22 April 1902. Lascelles MSS, vol. iii, Part 3.
[3] Lascelles to Lansdowne, 25 April 1902 and postscript of 26 April. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xiii. [4] See pp. 107–8. [5] See p. 82.

he could not see that 'it will ever be of advantage to Germany to let us "go under" before a great European coalition'. She would perhaps follow a *politique de pourboire*, but she would never join France and Russia.[1] Lascelles agreed generally with this analysis.[2] And Lansdowne found another, unexpected, supporter in his desire to preserve good relations. The professional staff of the Foreign Office were at this time set upon an increasingly anti-German course, but Sanderson, their permanent head and the oldest and most experienced of them, stood apart from this trend and indeed grew increasingly isolated by it. Naturally a cautious and balanced man, he deplored anti-German excess as earlier he had deplored pro-German excess.

> Whereas some time ago I had to explain often enough that there were certain things we could not expect of the Germans, however friendly they might be, I have now, whenever they are mentioned, to labour to show that the conduct of the German government has in some material respects been friendly. There is a settled dislike of them, and an impression that they are ready and anxious to play us any shabby trick they can. It is an inconvenient state of things for there are a good many questions in which it is important for both countries that we should work cordially together.[3]

Generally, however, British foreign policy in the first half of 1902 was independent of both the great alliances in Europe. There was renewed confidence in Britain's international position, a confidence that had first become marked in Bertie's and Cranborne's memoranda on the German alliance. As 1902 went by, confidence increased. The supreme crisis of the Boer War had been surmounted and the war itself was drawing to a close. But above all the Japanese Alliance had been successful in bringing about a solution of the Manchurian problem.

The Alliance had been a severe diplomatic defeat for the Russians, and Lamsdorff spoke to Scott on 17 February of the need for 'counter precautions' by other Powers.[4] These counter-precautions proved to be a Franco-Russian Declaration, published on 20 March, in which the two Powers welcomed the adoption by the Anglo-Japanese Alliance of the principles of the Open Door and of

[1] Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 247.
[2] Ibid., pp. 247–8.
[3] Sanderson to Lascelles, 5 March 1902. Lascelles MSS, vol. iii, Part 2.
[4] Scott to Lansdowne, telegram No. 11, 17 Feb. 1902. F.O. 65/1644.

the integrity and independence of China, but announced that since the Alliance took precautions against the violation of these principles, it was necessary for them also to reserve the right 'd'aviser éventuellement aux moyens d'en assurer la sauvegarde'.[1] This Declaration was interpreted as extending the obligations of the Dual Alliance from Europe to Asia,[2] and it increased the danger that France would intervene in a Russo-Japanese war, and that Britain would thereby be forced to honour her obligations to Japan. But all this lay in the future; the immediate result of the Japanese Alliance was as satisfactory as Lansdowne could have hoped.

In January 1902 the Russo-Chinese negotiations, held up by the death of Li Hung-Chang, began once again to move forward, and on 7 February Hayashi suggested a joint Anglo-Japanese representation at St Petersburg.[3] But such a communication, coming at the same time as the announcement of the Alliance, would have given the impression, which Lansdowne hoped to avoid, that Britain was committed to an anti-Russian policy. Moreover, he believed that the Czar, Lamsdorff, and Witte were pacific and genuinely wished to extricate themselves from Manchuria.[4] He therefore rejected the Japanese proposal on the ground that if Russia rebuffed the joint approach the effect on public opinion would be 'unfortunate'.[5] After this discouragement, however, the Japanese were surprisingly moderate and even supported a Chinese counter-draft which Lansdowne himself considered inadequate as a guarantee of treaty rights.[6] This discovery that the Japanese were not after all exacting allies was a cause of satisfaction to the British. Another was the new American interest in the Far East. The United States addressed a firm remonstrance to Russia and China against a highly objectionable draft of the convention which had been urged by the Russo-Chinese Bank,[7] and afterwards co-operated with Britain and Japan to procure the acceptance of a moderate agreement. This American intervention gave great satisfaction to the British, who were already impressed

[1] B.D. II.145.
[2] Monson to Lansdowne, despatch No. 97, 21 March 1901. F.O. 27/3577.
[3] Lansdowne to MacDonald, despatch No. 20, 15 Feb. 1902. F.O. 46/550.
[4] Lansdowne to Curzon, 16 Feb. 1902. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xxix.
[5] Lansdowne to MacDonald, despatch No. 20, 15 Feb. 1902. F.O. 46/550.
[6] MacDonald to Lansdowne, telegram No. 12, 2 March 1902. F.O. 46/554.
[7] Pauncefote to Lansdowne, telegram No. 9, 9 Feb. 1902. F.O. Print (China), vol. 7826, No. 15.

by America's great potential power.[1] Anglo-American relations were good: the question most at issue between the two countries—that of the Isthmian canal—had been settled by the Hay-Pauncefote Treaty in December; Hay, the Secretary of State, was a convinced Anglophile; and Roosevelt, who had just become President, was likely to follow a vigorous China policy if he could. Lansdowne therefore welcomed the new American initiative eagerly, told them of the Japanese Alliance in advance[2] and then co-operated with them to obtain an acceptable Manchurian settlement. On 8 April the Russians at last agreed, on moderate terms, to evacuate Manchuria within eighteen months. It was a great triumph for Lansdowne's much-criticised Japanese Alliance and removed the most pressing threat of war from the world. Lansdowne could now face, with regret but without apprehension, the fact that Russia would not settle her differences with Britain: 'I wish I could disagree with you [Curzon] in your conclusion as to the impossibility of an agreement with Russia over Asiatic questions. I fear however that it is irresistible.'[3]

Relations with France fitted into the general pattern of Lansdowne's policy; he could afford to remain independent of her and made no attempt to negotiate the major problems that lay between the two countries. But at the same time the steadily growing feeling of friendship that had already been perceptible in 1901 continued to flourish. On 24 December he wrote to Cromer:

> I have been struck by the comparative friendliness of the French. At this moment if I am to have a tiresome minor affair with one of the Embassies, I would sooner have it with the French Embassy than with any other. Their manners are better and in substance they are easier to deal with than the rest.[4]

During 1902 he continued to edge towards a settlement of the troublesome minor question of the Newfoundland fisheries, if necessary by means of concessions elsewhere. By March he had

[1] Selborne had written to Curzon in 1901: 'I would never quarrel with the U.S. if I could possibly avoid it. It has not dawned on our countrymen yet . . . that, if the Americans choose to pay for what they can easily afford, they can gradually build up a navy, fully as large and then larger than ours and I am not sure they will not do it.' Selborne to Curzon, 19 April 1901. Curzon MSS, Blue Volume, 'Original Letters 1899–1901'.

[2] Lansdowne to Pauncefote, 11 Feb. 1902. F.O. Print (China), vol. 7826, No. 26.

[3] Lansdowne to Curzon, 10 April 1902. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xxix.

[4] Lansdowne to Cromer, 26 Dec. 1901. Ibid., vol. vii.

brought himself to the point of being willing to hint at such an arrangement. He told Chamberlain on the 11th that if Cambon made no suggestion of his own about a Nigerian frontier dispute, he was inclined to say 'that we can give up nothing in Nigeria except for a quid pro quo, and that this seems to me at least to afford materials for such a transaction as he and I have always contemplated in regard to Newfoundland'.[1] On the 30th he accordingly hinted to Cambon at such a transaction between Britain and France.

> I had, as he was aware, never excluded the idea of reasonable 'give-and-take' arrangements in regard to their possessions in different parts of the world. Whenever, therefore, a proposal was made to us such as he had indicated, we should be ready to examine it and consider whether it was one which we could entertain and, if so, what kind of compensation we should ask for.[2]

An agreement like this depended upon the fact that both Britain and France were well-established colonial Powers with great empires. No such mutually convenient arrangements could be made with Germany. Small as such a settlement might be, it was bound to generate friendship and clear the way for an understanding on more contentious differences.

But where an Anglo-French agreement would involve other Powers and so have wider implications Lansdowne moved only slowly and hesitantly. In Siam, for example, it was only the force of events and pressure from Chamberlain which drove him towards a settlement. The British position there was one of some embarrassment. Britain was anxious to ensure her own control of the Malay Peninsula, parts of which were nominally under Siamese suzerainty, but wished at the same time to check the strengthening of the French hold in the Mekong valley. A secret Anglo-Siamese agreement in 1897 had only increased the embarrassment without guaranteeing British interests. Towards the end of 1901 the Colonial Office, alarmed by reports that other Powers might be using Siamese suzerainty to penetrate into the Malay States, began to press the Foreign Office to assert British rights beyond all doubt. Once again all the materials for a com-

[1] Lansdowne to Chamberlain, 11 March 1902. Chamberlain MSS, Box JC 11/4.
[2] Lansdowne to Monson, despatch No. 90, 30 April 1902. F.O. Print (West Africa), vol. 7996, No. 18.

promise of mutual convenience with France appeared to be present; but Lansdowne was most unwilling to break with traditional policy. He disliked a Colonial Office proposal to appoint British officers as Consuls resident in the Siamese Malay states because 'if much attention is attracted to it, we shall at once have counter-vailing demands from the French and perhaps from other Governments'.[1] Hamilton too thought that 'we must give a stronger backing to Siam than we have heretofore done, if she is to resist France's continuous aggressions upon her'.[2] But the pressure of events made this attitude more and more difficult to maintain. Lansdowne tried to secure British interests by negotiation with Siam, instead of by coercion or an approach to France, but the Siamese proved obstinate and by July deadlock had been reached.

In Morocco, Lansdowne continued his efforts to prevent any controversial questions from being raised. His only positive action was to promise Italy on 11 March that if the status quo in Tripoli were changed, the change would be 'in conformity with Italian interests'.[3] This was to counteract the effects of the Franco-Italian *rapprochement* in the Mediterranean which was commonly supposed to be based upon a promise by France not to interest herself in Tripoli in return for a similar promise from Italy in Morocco. Lansdowne was now able to obtain from the Italians a promise that they had not entered, and would not enter, into any Mediterranean agreement inimical to British interests.[4] The Italians could not however be trusted, and Lansdowne regarded their failure to communicate the Franco-Italian agreement on Morocco as 'fishy'.[5]

In Morocco itself Lansdowne maintained his policy of reserve. A new French Minister, Saint-René Taillandier, arrived at the beginning of 1902 and began to pursue a vigorous forward policy. The King wanted to 'counter French intrigues' by the use of 'more forcible language'[6]; but Lansdowne, warned by Monson of Delcassé's opinion that 'if there is any one question on which her interests would force France to draw the sword, it would be the

[1] Lansdowne to Tower, 15 April 1902. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xxvi.
[2] Hamilton to Curzon, 6 Feb. 1902. Hamilton MSS, Letters to Curzon, vol. iv.
[3] Currie to Lansdowne, despatch No. 37, 15 March 1902. F.O. Print (N.E. Africa and Sudan), vol. 8181, No. 154.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Lansdowne to Currie, 28 Feb. 1902. Lansdowne MSS, vol xxvii.
[6] Minute on Nicolson to Lansdowne, 24 Jan. 1902. Lansdowne MSS. vol. xix.

interference of any power whatever in Morocco',[1] refused to make any move. He instructed Nicolson to warn the Sultan against an adventurous railway policy in case it provoked foreign interference[2] and told Cambon that 'it seemed to me desirable that neither Power should show itself unduly suspicious of the other'.[3] When the Sultan spoke of raising a loan, Nicolson was instructed, in February, to 'do everything in his power to dissuade him'.[4] Lansdowne explained in a minute that if Britain found the money 'we . . . should provoke further activity on the part of the French, who are active enough already'; if a loan could not be avoided, 'some joint arrangement in which several Powers would participate would be best'.[5] But a loan would necessarily raise the Moroccan question, and this Lansdowne was anxious to avoid.

He succeeded in this aim, and Morocco remained quiet. The feeling of confidence already produced by the Manchurian settlement therefore received no setback and was in fact greatly encouraged by the end of the Boer War. The treaty of Vereeniging, signed on 31 May, ended the diversion of British resources into the war and increased Lansdowne's freedom of action. The end of the war was followed on 11 July by the retirement of Salisbury and then of Hicks Beach—the two members of the Cabinet who had always opposed any adventurous or expensive policy. Salisbury had been consistently sceptical about Lansdowne's initiatives (the approaches to Germany and Russia, the Japanese Alliance) and had continued to play a decisive rôle in having them modified or rejected by the Cabinet. Lansdowne, wrote Brodrick in 1901, is 'doing wonderfully well at the F.O.—always resourceful and only kept back by Lord S'[6]; on another occasion the same correspondent described the Prime Minister as 'epigrammatic and demoralizing to the last degree'.[7] No doubt Salisbury at the end of his life had grown increasingly averse to change of any sort, and his colleagues saw and were irritated by this attitude; perhaps this

[1] Monson to Lansdowne, despatch No. 12, 10 Jan. 1902. F.O. 27/3576.
[2] Lansdowne to Nicolson, 25 Dec. 1901. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xix.
[3] B.D. II.320.
[4] Lansdowne to Nicolson, despatch No. 24, 26 Feb. 1902. F.O. Print (Morocco), vol. 8077, No. 49.
[5] Minute by Lansdowne on Nicolson, telegrams Nos. 26 and 27, Feb. 1902 (no day). F.O. 99/400.
[6] Brodrick to Curzon, 15 Nov. 1901. Curzon MSS, Correspondence with Brodrick 1898–1903.
[7] Brodrick to Curzon, 15 Feb. 1901. Ibid.

tended to conceal from them the fact that the reasons for his obstruction were usually excellent. The Germans had refused help in the Far East, except at a price which even Lansdowne was not willing to pay; the Russians had declined Lansdowne's overture in October 1901; and the Cabinet itself had recognised the justice of Salisbury's criticisms in January 1902 of the Japanese Alliance. It was Salisbury's and not Chamberlain's analysis of international relations in 1899–1900 which had been borne out by events: the attempts to reach an understanding with Germany had failed, while relations with France had steadily improved. But this fact had not always been recognised in the irritation caused by his conservatism, and the hope that greater freedom of action would follow his retirement was therefore to prove largely deceptive.

Salisbury had supported, and been supported by, Hicks Beach: Selborne wrote that 'generally he and Beach were alone, with perhaps James, on Navy and suchlike questions'.[1] Hicks Beach's insistence on economy at a time of great difficulty had exasperated his colleagues: 'Matters had got to that point between him and me that one of us had to go', was Selborne's comment on his retirement.[2] Once again it was hoped that the change would allow a stronger and more adventurous policy, but once again, although the tension between the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the rest of the Cabinet was never again so acute, the difficulty survived the man.

In the new Cabinet Balfour became Prime Minister, and Ritchie, formerly Home Secretary, replaced Hicks Beach at the Exchequer. There were only two new members—Austen Chamberlain as Postmaster-General and George Wyndham as Chief Secretary for Ireland—and there were no changes in the other major departments. These changes, although they allowed for more flexibility, did not, like those of November 1900, favour any particular policy: Salisbury had survived the period of greatest friendship for Germany, and when he left the tide was flowing strongly against her. If the new Prime Minister was more friendly to the Germans than his predecessor, so also was the anti-German Joseph Chamberlain, now supported by his son Austen, left without dispute as the strongest personality in the government.

[1] Selborne to Curzon, 17 July 1902. Curzon MSS, Box S, Part 2.
[2] Ibid.

2

On 23 July Cambon spoke, as he claimed, on his own initiative, of an Anglo-French arrangement in Morocco by which, in exchange for certain unspecified concessions to France in the hinterland, Britain would secure the neutralisation of Tangiers. Lansdowne's reply, non-committal but friendly, was that 'he would find me perfectly ready to discuss [these questions] with him in the frankest possible manner'.[1] On the 30th Cambon extended his offer to include Siam. He proposed that the two Powers should be able to do 'what we pleased, when, where and how we pleased' in their own spheres of interest: for Britain the Malay Peninsula and the Siamese border with Burma, for France the Siamese border with her own Indo-Chinese possessions. Lansdowne, again without committing himself, repeated his readiness to discuss such questions with 'absolute frankness'.[2] Thus encouraged, Cambon developed his ideas on 6 August, claiming this time to speak for Delcassé. He now gave his Siamese proposals an anti-German tendency: Siam, he declared, did not concern Germany, and 'it was our business so far as possible to protect Siam against the intervention of Germany'. Lansdowne agreed that conditions in Siam were 'somewhat vague, and therefore, perhaps, dangerous'. On Morocco, Cambon proposed to neutralise Tangiers and give Spain a stretch of the coast and some hinterland, leaving France to exercise 'exclusive influence' in the rest of the country. He dwelt at length on Germany's failure to establish herself there and also implied that Italy was now without interest in the area. But Lansdowne's reaction to his Moroccan proposals was much cooler than that to his Siamese proposals. He told him that, with Germany, Spain, and Italy involved, 'any attempt to deal prematurely with the "liquidation" of Morocco would . . . be sure to lead to serious complications'.[3] His caution was reinforced by advice from Monson, who told him that 'it is surely vain to suppose that the future of Morocco can be settled between the two Great Western European Powers exclusively'.[4]

These replies anticipated the policy he was to pursue in the

[1] B.D. II.321.
[2] Lansdowne to Monson, despatch No. 306, 30 July 1902. F.O. 27/3574.
[3] B.D. II.322.
[4] Monson to Lansdowne, despatch No. 308. 25 Aug. 1902. F.O. 27/3579.

following months. In Siam, where the Colonial Office was pressing hard and where he could make no headway with the Siamese themselves, Cambon's proposals offered an easy way out of his difficulties. In a memorandum of 3 August, Bertie drew attention to the danger of interference by Germany, who 'would like to be a party to a guarantee of some sort so as to have something to say in a matter which concerns England and France and be the "tertius gaudens" '.[1] This danger had already exercised Lansdowne; and in addition the obstinacy of the Siamese themselves had made it impossible for him to resist Colonial Office pressure for a direct assertion of British rights at their expense. He therefore wrote to Chamberlain on 23 August to admit that he could no longer rely on the Siamese negotiations alone. He stressed the danger that the Germans would be offered a coaling-station, for which they had been 'nibbling', and perhaps Russia also; and proposed to take decisive, unilateral action to defend British interests in the Malay Peninsula. This would of course lead the French to take the same action in the Mekong; but Lansdowne declared that 'I for one do not believe it would hurt us'.[2] The idea was of course taken up enthusiastically by Chamberlain, who commended it to Balfour with the advice that the situation was 'critical and urgent'.[3] Balfour agreed that French influence in the Mekong 'can do us no harm'. He too was anxious to find some way to keep the Germans out: whether the French could be taken into Britain's confidence would depend not only on their good faith but also on whether 'they would rather have a good working arrangement with us as regards *all* Siam than see the Germans and Russians poke their nose into our end of it'.[4] Chamberlain sent this reply to Lansdowne with the comment that 'we may assume the good faith of the French'[5]; and Lansdowne then decided to 'make a clean breast' to the French of the secret agreement of 1897.[6] An understanding with France was in Siam the only way out of an intolerable situation; but, more than that, it would also provide protection against the future danger of German interference.

The way was now open for Lansdowne to bring heavy pressure

[1] Memo by Bertie, 3 Aug. 1902. F.O. 69/837.
[2] Lansdowne to Chamberlain, 23 Aug. 1902. Chamberlain MSS, Box JC 11/4.
[3] Amery, *Joseph Chamberlain*, p. 185.
[4] Balfour to Chamberlain, 26 Aug. 1902. Balfour MSS, Add. MSS 49774.
[5] Chamberlain to Lansdowne, 28 Aug. 1902. F.O. 69/837.
[6] Minute by Lansdowne on memo by Mallet, 4 Sept. 1902. Ibid.

on the Siamese. They capitulated and on 6 October gave the British the assurances they had demanded.[1] When on the next day the French obtained a similar agreement consolidating their hold in the Mekong, Lansdowne could look on with equanimity. 'I don't think their arrangement with Siam will do us any harm', he told Cromer on the 9th.[2] He therefore assured Cambon on 15 October that he 'had no desire to criticise the Franco-Siamese Treaty in a pedantic spirit, and that [he] was quite inclined to agree with M. Delcassé in believing that these matters were capable of satisfactory adjustments between our two Governments'.[3] But there was a tactical difficulty. The treaty was too moderate to please the colonialist party in France and was meeting with powerful opposition; if Britain revealed her secret agreement of 1897 she would be playing into the hands of the extremists. All, therefore, that Lansdowne would do immediately was to accept the principle of the French treaty as 'reasonable' and promise to examine 'in a friendly spirit' the proposal to exclude the influence of third Powers when the Chamber had ratified the treaty.[4]

Morocco was in a very different position. It was a much larger question than Siam; no immediate decision was required; and Britain's strategic position would be weakened if she accepted the French terms. A memorandum from the Military Intelligence Division on 9 September maintained that British policy should try to preserve the status quo. If Morocco nevertheless disintegrated or was slowly absorbed by France, 'it will then be for England and Germany to decide whether they shall stake out claims before it is too late'. The writer suggested that France could take the east of the country, Britain the coastline from Tangiers to Casablanca, and Germany the coast south of Casablanca.[5] The Board of Admiralty laid down that 'the acquisition by France of territory which gives her control of the ports on the seacoast of Morocco from Mazagan northwards should be opposed'. If France absorbed the larger part of Morocco for any cause, Britain should insist on the neutralisation of Tangiers.[6]

[1] Lansdowne to Archer, 6 Oct. 1902. F.O. Print (Siam), vol. 7968, No. 276 and enclosures.
[2] Lansdowne to Cromer, 9 Oct. 1902. Lansdowne MSS, vol. vii.
[3] B.D. II.325. [4] B.D. II.327.
[5] Memo by Forestier-Walker, 9 Sept. 1902. F.O. 99/400.
[6] Note from G. H. Hoste of the Admiralty on opinion of the Board, 19 August 1902. Ibid.

There was also the danger of international repercussions if Britain struck a bargain with France in Morocco. Lansdowne was reminded of this when in September Dumba, the Austrian chargé in Paris, warned Monson that if Britain agreed to French pretensions in Morocco, 'the situation in the Mediterranean would be changed in a manner extremely serious to the interests of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, as well as to those of the other Mediterranean Powers'. Monson assured him that Britain had no intention of reversing her traditional policy.[1] Reports of an Anglo-French agreement also reached the ears of the Moors themselves, and in alarm the Sultan sent Kaid Maclean, the British commander of his army, to London for reassurance; he asked for a promise of help if any Power threatened to disturb the status quo and a guarantee for seven years of the existing government. He threatened, if rebuffed, to appeal to Germany.[2] Lansdowne was faced with the prospect that the whole Moroccan question would be raised in a most embarrassing form, and this he was determined to avoid. He therefore declined to give the Moors the guarantees for which they asked, but soothed their fears by a firm statement that Britain 'will not acquiesce' in any attempt by a single Power to obtain a free hand in Morocco.[3]

Lansdowne had in fact no motive for departing from his policy of ignoring the Moroccan question as far as possible. The situation demanded no action, and action of any sort would be hazardous. He therefore told Cambon firmly on 15 October that 'we were not prepared to discuss a possible "liquidation" of Morocco and that so far as I could understand the terms upon which it was suggested that such a liquidation might take place, they appeared to me to be of a kind which we should have difficulty in accepting'.[4]

The whole problem might now with luck be put off for another few years. On the other hand, it was growing increasingly difficult for Lansdowne to hide from himself the fact that it would have to be faced eventually. The steady, unspectacular, French advance had now been continuing for some time, and in September Nicolson forecast that it would get within measurable distance of Fez within

[1] B.D. II.324.
[2] Memo by Nicolson, 3 Oct. 1902. F.O. Print (Morocco), vol. 8077, No. 168; memo by Maclean, 30 Oct. 1902. F.O. 99/400.
[3] Memo by Lansdowne for Maclean. F.O. Print (Morocco), vol. 8077, No. 188.
[4] B.D. II.325.

another one or two years.[1] Then there was the question of a loan, which the Sultan was once again pressing, and which would inevitably have political implications; Nicolson reported that he was 'determined on the matter' and would turn to France or Germany if refused by Britain.[2] Reluctantly, Lansdowne was compelled to formulate a Moroccan policy. He was still anxious to avoid a loan if he could, but if he could not, then it would be safest to have (as he had suggested in February) a joint advance by Britain, France, and Germany. More important, he also hoped that control of the railway which the Sultan hoped to build with his money should also be divided among those three Powers.[3] He was drifting in the direction of an eventual partition of Morocco among Britain, France, and Germany.

In October the British even began to work out detailed plans along those lines. Sir William Nicholson, Director of Military Intelligence, argued that it was 'to our advantage to interpose a German sphere of influence between the French sphere in Algeria and its extension westwards'. He suggested therefore that Germany should build a line from El Araish to Fez, France from Casablanca via Rabat to Fez, and Britain from Casablanca via Mazagan to Marrakesh. The fact that both the French and German lines terminated at Fez would mean that mutual jealousy would prevent either Power from seizing Tangiers.[4] Robertson, Nicholson's subordinate, was apprehensive that Germany would acquire a naval base at Tangiers; but Custance, the Director of Naval Intelligence, while recognising Germany's ambitions, was not alarmed by the possibility. His view, like Nicholson's, was that 'it would seem to be advantageous to this country that Germany should have an interest in the Fez-Tangier section of the railway, because she would act as a counterpoise to France and, as against ourselves, her position there would be weak because we should be between her force in the North Sea and any detachment she might have in the Straits of Gibraltar'.[5]

[1] Sir Arthur Nicolson to Sanderson, 24 Sept. 1902. F.O. 99/400.
[2] Memo by Nicolson, 25 Sept. 1902. F.O. Print (Morocco), vol. 8077, No. 169.
[3] Memoranda for Maclean. Ibid., Nos. 188 and 194.
[4] Memoranda by D.M.I., 24 Oct. and 22 Nov. 1902. F.O. 99/400.
[5] Memorandum by D.N.I., 28 Oct. 1902. Ibid.

3

With international conditions as favourable as they seemed to be during the first half of 1902, Lansdowne had no compelling motive to seek a settlement of differences with France or Russia. But in the second half of the year the international scene, which had seemed so bright at the end of the Boer War, began once again to cloud over, and British confidence began once again to decline.

Relations with Germany caused growing anxiety. In August H. O. Arnold-Forster, Parliamentary Secretary at the Admiralty and an eminent writer on defence subjects, visited the German naval establishments. He was highly impressed by their efficiency, which was in some cases greater than that of the British Navy, and declared that Germany must now be regarded as a possible enemy at sea.[1] In October, Selborne officially adopted this view in a Cabinet memorandum:

> I am convinced that the great new German navy is being carefully built up from the point of view of a war with us. . . . It cannot be designed for the purpose of playing a leading part in a future war between Germany and France and Russia. . . . Sir F. Lascelles does not believe that the German Emperor or Government are really unfriendly to this country and he is convinced that the true interests of Germany lie in maintaining friendly relations with us, but he is equally convinced that in deciding on a naval policy we cannot safely ignore the malignant hatred of the German people or the manifest design of the German Navy.

Selborne had therefore abandoned the assumptions upon which his naval policy had rested in 1901. He still proposed, however, that the combined fleets of the next two naval Powers—still France and Russia—should be taken as the standard of British strength. Even this meant an increase in estimates: if all the Powers maintained their published programmes, Britain would by 1908 have six fewer battleships than the Dual Alliance. To maintain the British lead, therefore, he demanded an immediate rise in the estimates of nearly three million pounds.[2] But even a rise of this size

[1] 'Notes on a visit to Kiel and Wilhelmshaven in August 1902 and general remarks on the German Navy and Naval Establishments' by H. O. Arnold-Forster, 15 Sept. 1902. P.R.O., Adm. 116/940B.

[2] Memo by Selborne, 'Naval estimates 1903–1904', 17 Oct. 1902. Chamberlain MSS. Box JC 14/4.

was inadequate now that Germany also must be regarded as a rival; and Selborne had already admitted the impossibility of building against the next *three* naval powers. This meant that, without a change of policy, the Navy must become inadequate to its task, and that it was all the more necessary to reduce possible causes of conflict with other Powers.

The first serious clash of Anglo-German interests came in the Yangtze valley, which the British had always regarded as their share in the unwelcome event of the partition of China. Chamberlain in particular had always been anxious to ensure British control there. The only competitor was Germany, who was seeking to consolidate and then extend her hold on Shantung and whose activities had caused concern as early as March.[1] During the spring she had resisted Lansdowne's attempts to arrange the evacuation of Shanghai, which was occupied by a combined Anglo-Franco-German-Japanese force, and Lansdowne had admitted that 'it is difficult to know what they [the Germans] are up to'.[2]

In July, at the request of China, he again took up the question of Shanghai[3] and suggested that the city should be evacuated by 1 November.[4] Japan accepted at once,[5] but the French and German answers were delayed. Then, on 7 October, there came a bolt out of the blue. Eckardstein announced that Germany would only accept Lansdowne's proposal for early evacuation upon conditions. One of these was that the Chinese should promise to grant no special concessions in the area of the Yangtze.[6] On the 10th, even before Lansdowne could reply, the Germans told him that China had already verbally accepted their conditions.[7] France supported Germany, who had, according to Satow, told her that Britain was aiming at a privileged position in the Yangtze which the condition was designed to make impossible.[8]

The British reacted strongly. Edward VII minuted that 'it is

[1] Lansdowne to Lascelles, despatch No. 75, 18 March 1902. F.O. 64/1550.
[2] Lansdowne to Satow, 17 May 1902. Lansdowne MSS, vol. iii.
[3] Satow to Lansdowne, 30 July 1902, and telegrams to Monson, Lascelles, and MacDonald, 31 July, F.O. Print (China) vol. 7906, Nos. 98, 99.
[4] Telegrams to Monson, Lascelles, MacDonald, 19 Sept. 1902. F.O. Print (China), vol. 7908, Nos. 37–9.
[5] MacDonald to Lansdowne, 22 Sept. 1902. Ibid., No. 43.
[6] Eckardstein to Lansdowne, 7 Oct. 1902. F.O. Print (China), vol. 7955, No. 19.
[7] Lansdowne to Lascelles, despatch No. 251A, 10 Oct. 1902. F.O. 64/1550.
[8] Satow to Lansdowne, 10 Oct. and 15 Oct. 1902, F.O. Print (China), vol. 7955, Nos. 34, 62.

inconceivable, the continual unfriendliness on the part of the German government on every possible occasion!'.[1] Lansdowne, with the support of Japan, told the Chinese that he 'deeply resented' their behaviour and that he could not recognise any limitation upon his freedom of action.[2] In the face of this pressure the Germans retreated—but even the manner of their retreat was unsatisfactory. Metternich told Lansdowne on 3 November that they had only approached the Chinese after the British refusal to accept their proposal, and that the conditions applied to the whole of China and not just to the Yangtze[3]; but Satow had already sent evidence that neither statement was true.[4] Lansdowne's reply to Metternich on the 6th was therefore an angry one. It stated flatly that Britain could not regard herself as bound by the Sino-German agreement, and proved the falsity of the Ambassador's arguments.[5] Lansdowne even complained to Cambon about German tactics.[6] Hamilton told Curzon that he had been supported by Chamberlain and declared: 'I never recollect . . . the lie given so directly by the F.O. to the representative of any Great Power.'[7] Lansdowne also complained to the Kaiser when he visited England that, while other Powers had established spheres in China, 'in the region where we had the largest interests we had obtained no corresponding privileges'. The Kaiser's reply that 'it was absolutely necessary for the development of Germany that she should have coaling-stations' could hardly have been reassuring, coming a few weeks after Selborne's memorandum.[8]

Important as the growing rift with Germany was to become, it was not upon this but upon renewed conflict with Russia that the Foreign Office concentrated its attention at the end of 1902. On 22 September O'Conor reported that the Porte had given the Russians permission to send four unarmed torpedo-boats through the Straits into the Black Sea.[9] The British, who interpreted the

[1] Minute on Satow to Lansdowne, 9 Oct. 1902. Lansdowne MSS, vol. iv.
[2] B.D. II.158. Lansdowne to Satow, telegrams Nos. 257 and 259, 16 Oct. 1902. F.O. Print (China) vol. 7955, Nos. 64A, 65.
[3] Lansdowne to Buchanan, despatch No. 278, 3 Nov. 1902. F.O. 64/1550.
[4] Satow to Lansdowne, telegram No. 328, F.O. Print (China), vol. 7955, No. 130.
[5] Lansdowne to Metternich, 6 Nov. 1902. F.O. Print (China), vol. 7956 ,No. 30.
[6] *Documents diplomatiques français, Second Series*, II.479. Hereafter cited as D.D.F.
[7] Hamilton to Curzon, 13 Nov. 1902. Hamilton MSS, letters to Curzon, vol. iv.
[8] B.D. II.164.
[9] O'Conor to Lansdowne, 22 Sept. 1902. F.O. Print (S.E. Europe), vol. 8174, No. 104.

Rule of the Straits as closing them to all foreign warships, could not accept this, and set about organising a coalition to bring pressure on the Turks. Lansdowne, encouraged by an approach from Constans, the French Ambassador at Constantinople,[1] even appealed to France, believing her to be '[no] better pleased than we are at the action of the Porte'.[2] But Delcassé refused to be drawn.[3] The Germans also held back, giving Lansdowne to understand that 'we had neglected the friendship of Germany and therefore had only ourselves to blame if she declined to act with us in such questions as that which we were discussing'.[4]

There remained Austria and Italy, Britain's partners in the old Mediterranean entente. The British position at the Straits was in fact strategically so weak that the possibility of intervention depended almost entirely on the prospects of Austrian help. Already, in January, Lansdowne, asked by O'Conor what Britain would do if the Russian fleet suddenly descended on Constantinople, had replied:

1. Our action, when the time comes, would depend largely upon the attitude of other Powers, more especially upon the willingness of Austria to cooperate with us against Russia and upon the friendliness or hostility of France and finally upon the conduct of Turkey herself.

2. It is not very likely that the Admiralty will risk their ships in the Straits, and they certainly would not do so if the French were hostile and had to be reckoned with in the Mediterranean, nor should we be able to get the fleet to the Straits in time if Turkey connived at the Russian intrusion.

3. I do not believe we should land a force to hold the Gallipoli peninsula. If however Austria was in earnest in desiring to oppose a Russian advance, it would be comparatively easy for her to do what was necessary. We should in that case be able to give her effectual support by sea.

He added that Britain would take Lemnos if she could not stop Russia at the Straits; and that, in the event of a sudden emergency, O'Conor should as far as possible act with his Austrian colleague.[5]

[1] O'Conor to Lansdowne, 2 Sept. 1902. Ibid., No. 76.
[2] Lansdowne to Balfour, 1 Oct. 1902. Balfour MSS, Add. MSS 49727.
[3] Monson to Lansdowne, 18 Oct. 1902. F.O. Print (S.E. Europe), vol. 8174, No. 182.
[4] Lansdowne to Buchanan, 3 Nov. 1902. Ibid., No. 284.
[5] Lansdowne to O'Conor, 31 Jan. 1902. Copy in Balfour MSS, Add. MSS 49727.

Goluchowski, the Austrian Foreign Minister, when approached on 31 October, said that 'it was a great pity' that the 1887 agreements had been allowed to lapse and implied that he would like to see them revived.[1] On 9 November the Austrian chargé d'affaires officially proposed an exchange of views between Britain, Austria, and Italy 'as to the policy which the three Powers might adopt with the object of maintaining an "accord à trois" in reference to this question'. Lansdowne replied that he would be glad 'to exchange ideas with Austria and Italy in regard to the question of the Straits'.[2] He then saw the Kaiser at Sandringham on 14 November and told him of Goluchowski's desire to discuss the subject. 'It seemed to me very important', he added, 'that we should know the views of Germany upon a matter so important to the peace of Europe.' He then 'understood the Emperor to say that Germany would be ready to take part in such discussion as that proposed'.[3]

Fortified by this rather hesitant blessing, Lansdowne now approached the Italians, who replied that they would 'willingly enter upon an exchange of views' on the maintenance of the status quo.[4] When Goluchowski began to show reluctance to protest to Turkey about the torpedo-boats, but again recurred to his desire for 'a fresh arrangement on the lines of the former one', Plunkett told him that 'I believed Your Lordship to be well disposed to examine the question and to have a sincere desire of acting with the Austro-Hungarian government in regard to the Straits and the Mediterranean'.[5] It is clear, therefore, that Lansdowne did not discourage the idea of a new Mediterranean entente and allowed the Austrians to believe that he favoured it. But he was very cautious. He minuted on the 19th that 'it will be better to deal separately' with it[6] and for that reason instructed the chargé d'affaires in Berlin not to mention it to Richthofen.[7]

In December the possibility of a new Anglo-Austrian combina-

[1] Plunkett to Lansdowne, telegram No. 30, 31 Oct. 1902. F.O. 78/5248.
[2] Lansdowne to Plunkett, despatch No. 133, 9 Nov. 1902. Ibid.
[3] Lansdowne to Buchanan, despatch No. 301, 14 Nov. 1902. Ibid. The Kaiser's account does not include Lansdowne's request for a definition of the German attitude, and says simply that he had raised no objection to the discussions between the three Powers (G.P. XVIII-I, No. 5659).
[4] Rodd to Lansdowne, telegram No. 79, 19 Nov. 1902. F.O. 78/5248.
[5] Plunkett to Lansdowne, despatch No. 280, 20 Nov. 1902. Ibid.
[6] Rodd to Lansdowne, telegram No. 79, 19 Nov. 1902. Minute by Lansdowne. Ibid.
[7] Lansdowne to Buchanan, despatch No. 313, 21 Nov. 1902. Ibid.

tion suddenly faded. The Austrians, anxious about Macedonian complications, stated flatly that they could not risk their good relations with Russia over a minor infraction of the Rule of the Straits.[1] Lansdowne then warned them that the general talks on the Mediterranean advocated by Goluchowski would be bound to fail and that if Austria persisted in her refusal 'we should . . . have to reconsider our position and examine afresh the bases of our Mediterranean policy'.[2] But the Austrians were unmoved, and on 9 January 1903 finally refused to deliver a protest to Turkey.[3] Their example was followed by the Italians, who had already given warning that they would only protest if both other Powers did so.[4] The solitary British protest then had no effect, and the four boats passed the Straits between 13 and 30 January. The British could no longer be in any doubt about the weakness of the assumptions on which their Near Eastern policy rested, and were being steadily forced towards a change of policy.

The subject which really engrossed British attention in the second half of 1902 was however the renewed rivalry with Russia in Central Asia. Hamilton told Curzon that 'both in this Office [the India Office] and the Foreign Office I think [Persia] is the one question which more constantly occupies the official mind than any other subject connected with foreign politics'.[5] The signature of a new Russian loan contract in April was followed by Russian pressure on Persia to conclude a new tariff treaty which the Government of India described as 'quite penal'.[6] The India Office and the Foreign Office reacted to this new threat in different ways. Hamilton was still in despair: time was on Russia's side, 'and every year in spite of what we can do, she will advance slowly but continuously towards the Persian Gulf'.[7] Russia herself he believed to be 'practically invulnerable to the Powers she over-rides and intimidates'.[8] No policy could therefore be completely satisfactory to him; in 1901 he had refused money to keep Persia in being; but he

[1] Plunkett to Lansdowne, 18 Dec. 1902. Lansdowne MSS, vol. i.
[2] Lansdowne to Plunkett, 7 Jan. 1903. F.O. Print (S.E. Europe), vol. 8175, No. 24.
[3] Plunkett to Lansdowne, 9 Jan. 1903. Ibid., No. 28.
[4] Rodd to Lansdowne, 7 Jan. 1903. Ibid., No. 20.
[5] Hamilton to Curzon, 13 Aug. 1902. Hamilton MSS, Letters to Curzon, vol. iv. Selborne too thought that 'our most difficult question now is Persia'. To Curzon, 17 July 1902. Curzon MSS, Box S, Part 2.
[6] Lansdowne to des Graz, 24 May 1902. F.O. Print (Persia), vol. 8160. No. 150.
[7] Hamilton to Curzon, 6 Feb. 1902. Hamilton MSS, Letters to Curzon, vol. iv.
[8] Hamilton to Curzon, 8 Oct. 1902. Ibid.

believed that the alternative policy of asserting British interests in the south could only encourage the Russian advance.[1]

Hamilton admitted that 'Lansdowne . . . takes a more favourable view of our position in Persia than I do'.[2] This was true; but Lansdowne's vacillations show how difficult he also found it to discover a satisfactory policy. Extension of British rights in the south, as prescribed by the despatch presented in January, was no answer to a Russo-Persian tariff treaty—or not unless Britain wished to precipitate the whole Persian question. Lansdowne was therefore forced back on the old policy. In Hamilton's words, he 'went on the other tack, he was . . . conciliatory and courteous'.[3] An opportunity to please the Persians came with the state visit which the Shah, accompanied by the Grand Vizier, paid, much against Edward VII's will, in August.[4] During the visit Lansdowne extracted from the Grand Vizier an assurance that Britain would be consulted before any change was made in the tariff. In return he promised the Shah that the maintenance of Persian integrity remained Britain's first object, although he declared that she 'would put forth the whole of [her] strength' to protect her interests in the south against other Powers.[5]

Lansdowne's plans were however threatened by opposition from the King, who refused to give the Shah, as a non-Christian, the Order of the Garter. Hardinge prophesied disaster if the Shah was disappointed,[6] and Lansdowne, realising that 'all our hospitalities would be overshadowed by this rebuff',[7] pressed the King to give way. A sharp dispute followed, which, exacerbated by some personal feeling between Lansdowne and the King, threatened to turn into a constitutional crisis. The King was supported by Hamilton, who believed that measures of conciliation were futile,[8] but Lansdowne was supported by the Prime Minister. Devonshire was also

[1] Hamilton to Curzon, 24 July 1902. Ibid.
[2] Hamilton to Curzon, 13 Aug. 1902. Ibid.
[3] Hamilton to Curzon, 4 Sept. 1902. Ibid.
[4] In January the King had minuted that a visit in the summer would be '*most* inconvenient' (minute on Sir A. Hardinge to Lansdowne, 22 Jan. 1902. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xxi); but Hardinge insisted on the need to gratify the Shah (Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 234), and the King was persuaded to give way.
[5] Lansdowne to des Graz, 21 Aug. 1902. F.O. Print (Persia) vol. 8214, Nos. 122 and 123.
[6] A. Hardinge to Lansdowne, 6 Aug. and 1 Sept. 1902. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xxi.
[7] Lansdowne to Balfour, 22 Aug. 1902. Balfour MSS, Add. MSS 49727.
[8] Hamilton to Curzon, 20 Aug. and 4 Sept. 1902. Hamilton MSS, Letters to Curzon, vol. iv.

brought in and advised that the Cabinet should support Lansdowne, even to the point of resignation.[1] The King in the end only gave way when the threat of the resignation of the Cabinet was made, and then unwillingly; he was very angry with Lansdowne,[2] and relations between the two men always remained cool.[3] By the time this decision was reached the Shah had left England, and a special mission had to go to Tehran to invest him with the Garter in January 1903.[4]

Even while Lansdowne was trying to conciliate the Shah, he was also examining the possible methods by which he could carry out the policy laid down in his January despatch. He decided at the end of August that if Russia intervened in the north, Britain should intervene in the south, 'remaining there, as in China, till we had, jointly with Russia, whom we should then oblige to discuss the Persian question with us, re-established the authority, solvency and independence of the Shah's Government, or, should this prove impossible, till we had found other means of securing British interests in those regions'.[5] Balfour agreed. 'The fundamental principle which should govern us in discussing a forward policy is quite simple; until Russia moves we remain still; as soon as Russia moves in the north we move in the south. . . . No doubt it is possible, not, I hope, probable, that the presence of Russian and

[1] Newton, op. cit., pp. 237–8. [2] Ibid.

[3] The whole quarrel was made worse by a misunderstanding. Lansdowne persuaded the King to agree to consider a change in the Garter statutes to allow the Order to be conferred on a non-Christian and then, assuming that the King had given way, promised the Shah that he would get the Garter. The King denied that this was the meaning of his concession and told Lansdowne by telegraph: 'I cannot have my hand forced.' Lansdowne thereupon told Balfour that he 'much resented' the suggestion that he had misinterpreted the King's meaning. 'The fact is', he added, 'that the King wishes to change his mind again and would like to throw me over—that is a position which I could not possibly accept.' He replied to the King's telegram pressing his point and declaring that he had been 'influenced by considerations of no little political importance' (Lansdowne to Balfour, with enclosures, 22 Aug. and 24 Aug. 1902. Balfour MSS, Add. MSS 49727). On the other side, Knollys wrote to Balfour: 'The King thinks that he has not been fairly treated by Lord Lansdowne and that he has grounds for complaint against him in this respect' (Knollys to Balfour, 22 Oct. 1902. Royal Archives, R22). The threat of resignation came in the form of a letter from Balfour: 'If he [Lansdowne] resigned, could the matter stop there, in these days of governmental solidarity?' (Balfour to the King, 3 Nov. 1902. Royal Archives, R23).

[4] More pressure had to be brought on the King to give decorations to the Ministers who had accompanied the Shah to England (Lansdowne to Hardinge, 18 Nov. 1902; Hardinge to Barrington, 8 Dec. 1902; Lansdowne to Hardinge, 2 Jan. 1903. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xxi). Hardinge complained to Lansdowne's secretary about the King's attitude: 'Why won't the King trust his own minister who after all is only doing the best he can for him?' (Hardinge to Barrington, 8 Dec. 1902. Ibid.).

[5] Hardinge to Lansdowne, 27 Aug. 1902. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xxi.

English troops in the same country *might* end in a collision between the two Powers. It will, I imagine, most likely end in some kind of arrangement.'[1] Already, therefore, the British were beginning once more to talk wistfully of an agreement with Russia.

A few months later revelation of British military weakness in Persia made some accommodation with Russia seem not merely convenient but highly desirable. On 19 November representatives from the Foreign Office, the India Office, and the two Intelligence Departments met to examine the military requirements of Lansdowne's policy. They agreed that 'we have no troops available for the effective occupation of Persian territory, or even of any large number of Persian ports'. Operations inland could not be attempted but would have to be restricted to Seistan, Bunder Abbas, and Kishm, in the south-eastern corner of Persia. The conference concluded that all foreign intervention should be avoided.[2] Hamilton found that the report confirmed his opinion that the British lacked the force 'to materially extend our existing territories and protectorates',[3] and Lansdowne himself acknowledged that British military capability in Persia was 'less than some of us anticipated'.[4] By December, moreover, it was clear that Britain would have great difficulty in modifying the new tariff, in spite of the Grand Vizier's promise.[5] British policy in Persia seemed to have reached an impasse: support for Persia itself meant support of a state apparently under Russian control; but a policy of partition needed military strength which Britain lacked.

In Afghanistan the British had always recognised the equity of Russia's demand for local, non-political relations. Lansdowne hinted at this when he instructed Scott in January 1902 to tell Lamsdorff that Britain 'did not wish to contend that there is no force in the arguments which have been advanced' but that new arrangements could only be made with her consent. If Russia made a definite proposal, Britain would consider it in 'the most friendly spirit'.[6] But the Russians did not respond to this invitation.

[1] Balfour to Lansdowne, 6 Sept. 1902. Ibid.
[2] Enclosures in Hamilton to Curzon, 4 Dec. 1902. Hamilton MSS, Letters to Curzon, vol. iv.
[3] Hamilton to Curzon, 4 Dec. 1902. Ibid.
[4] Lansdowne to Sir A. Hardinge, 18 Nov. 1902. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xxi.
[5] A. Hardinge to Lansdowne, telegrams 1 Dec. 1902 and 5 Dec. 1902. F.O. (Persia) Print, vol. 8215, Nos. 267, 410.
[6] Lansdowne to Scott, despatch No. 31, 29 Jan. 1902. F.O. 65/1639.

There followed a silence of several months which made the British acutely uneasy. Curzon and the India Office—who were not often agreed—both suspected that Habibullah, the new Ameer, was negotiating with the Russians,[1] and pressed Lansdowne to take action. Lansdowne agreed that it was 'of the utmost importance' to 'arrive at a clear understanding with the Russian Government as to the relations of the latter with the Ameer',[2] and on 31 October instructed Charles Hardinge to press the Russians to make definite proposals.[3] When the Russians still maintained their silence, the Viceroy intervened. On 27 November he recommended that the Ameer should be threatened, unless he could give clear assurances of his loyalty, with the cancellation of all British obligations to him.[4] As usual, Curzon exhorted firmness: 'If you allow a man and a State of his calibre to flout the British Empire, then we had better put up our shutters and close business.'[5]

The Cabinet was in no mood to adopt this policy. The King, it is true, hoped for a 'strong and decided line',[6] and Sanderson doubted whether Russian good faith could ever be relied upon[7]; but they were ignored. Lansdowne had already decided that agreement with Russia would be the best way out. Hamilton, with the unanimous support of the India Council, believed that 'we should adhere to passive rather than to forcing tactics'.[8] Joseph Chamberlain, then in South Africa, wrote to his son Austen:

> You are quite right about Afghanistan. For Heaven's sake do not let Curzon get us into a row there. Remember that it ruined Dizzy's government. It would be much better to wash our hands of the whole business leaving the Ameer to go to Russia or the Devil—and making all necessary preparations for the defence of our own border.[9]

[1] Ronaldshay, *Lord Curzon*, vol. ii, pp. 266–7. I.O. to F.O. 22 Oct. 1902. F.O. 65/1655. Lyall to Sanderson, 16 Oct. 1902. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xxxi.
[2] F.O. to I.O., 28 Oct. 1902. F.O. 65/1655.
[3] Lansdowne to C. Hardinge, despatch No. 278, 31 Oct. 1902. F.O. 65/1639.
[4] Enclosure in I.O. to F.O., 28 Nov. 1902. F.O. 65/1655.
[5] Ronaldshay, op. cit., p. 267.
[6] Knollys to Bertie, 2 Dec. 1902. Bertie MSS, Series A.
[7] Sanderson to C. Hardinge, 19 Nov. 1902. Hardinge MSS, vol. iii. Sanderson wrote: 'I have not noticed that by any amount of enquiries or declarations you make the Russians show their hand or induce them to deal openly with us instead of behind our backs.'
[8] Cabinet memo by Hamilton, 5 Dec. 1902. Chamberlain MSS, Box JC 14/4.
[9] Joseph to Austen Chamberlain, 9 Jan. 1903. A. Chamberlain MSS, Box AC 8, Package 8a.

It was Balfour who provided the only closely-reasoned answer to Curzon. He agreed that the present Anglo-Afghan arrangements, by which Britain had no control over the Ameer and yet was committed to support him in war, could not be continued; but he wished to solve the problem by ending, not by widening, them.

> Our traditional policy has had a very doubtful success. . . . I submit then, if only for purposes of discussion, the following propositions: (a) that we should withdraw, in as friendly a way as possible, from any specific pledge to the present Ameer; (b) that we should do all that we can, by direct arrangement with Russia, to maintain the 'status quo'.[1]

During the second half of 1902 three problems had confronted the British: the Straits, Persia, and Afghanistan, Their effects were remarkably similar: all had demonstrated British weakness; all had shown the need to modify traditional policies; and all had pointed towards the need for agreement with Russia. Confidence, high in the summer, had fallen again. Hamilton told Curzon that all the members of the Cabinet except himself and Lansdowne were quite opposed to 'any action which is likely to produce war or disturbance in any part of the British Empire'.[2] 'I really believe', he added, '[that] if it was put to the vote, there would be a disposition to abandon all our present obligations, and to substitute nothing in their place except an attempt to come to an understanding with Russia.'[3]

[1] Memorandum by Balfour, 16 Dec. 1902. C.I.D. Records, Cab. 6/1, Paper 5.
[2] Hamilton to Curzon, 11 Dec. 1902. Hamilton MSS, Letters to Curzon, vol. iv. Hamilton was plainly exaggerating his own belligerent qualities.
[3] Ronaldshay, *Lord Curzon*, vol. ii, p. 268.

5

C.I.D. and Foreign Office: Currents of Thought

1

The need for a central authority to direct military and naval planning had been frequently urged at the end of the nineteenth century, but without effect. It was the Boer War, with its startling demonstration of the weakness of the British military system, which forced a change. But even then no radical reforms would have been attempted but for the change of Prime Ministers in 1902. Salisbury disliked planning in advance, distrusted service experts, and had no interest in military matters; Balfour was absorbed by problems of defence and had a natural inclination towards organisation and planning. On 18 December 1902, a few months after his succession, the Committee of Imperial Defence met for the first time. It was still in a rudimentary form: there was no secretariat, and the chair was taken not by the Prime Minister but by the Duke of Devonshire. But from the first it was Balfour who dominated and gave life to the Committee and who presided over its rapid development. On Devonshire's resignation in October 1903 he became its Chairman, and at once its power began to grow. In May 1904 a committee composed of Fisher, Esher, and Clarke recommended that it should have a permanent secretariat, and Balfour appointed Sir George Clarke as its first Secretary. At the same time the supreme position of the Prime Minister was confirmed when this committee decided that he was to be the only permanent member, with the rest of the membership ad hoc. By the end of 1905, when the Conservative government fell, the Committee had grown to become an important part of the government machine. One of the results of its rapid growth was to increase the power of the Prime Minister in determining foreign policy: from the start the Committee dealt not merely with the

details of military planning but also with the general problems of imperial strategy. Balfour began to play an increasingly important rôle in diplomacy. The Committee also increased the influence of the government's leading service experts, its most frequent members and personal friends of Balfour: Clarke, the first Secretary; Esher, who became a permanent member in 1905; and Fisher, First Sea Lord in 1904.

The first question to be answered by the Committee was that of the practicability of invasion. This had a long and contentious history, with the Army and Navy on opposite sides of an unresolved dispute. A paper from the War Office in February 1903 again argued the traditional Army view that invasion was a very real danger, to be guarded against by keeping powerful armed forces in this country. To support this argument, the War Office postulated that Germany would join a Franco-Russian attack on Britain. 'The contingency is by no means an impossible one; it is notorious that Germany views our naval power with jealousy and that single-handed she would have no chance of destroying it.'[1] A reply from the Director of Naval Intelligence maintained that the Navy alone could resist invasion; even if the battle fleet was defeated or away, Britain's enormous superiority in cruisers and torpedo-boats would still be sufficient to do this.[2]

Both sides had re-stated their usual arguments, none of which had settled the dispute in the past. But this was exactly the sort of question which Balfour hoped to settle by means of the Committee, and in November 1903 he issued its decision. Victory lay entirely with the Navy. After a masterly summary of all the possibilities of the situation, Balfour concluded that even if the battle fleet had been defeated, British superiority in smaller craft and the natural difficulties of transporting an army by sea made an invasion impossible.[3]

This decision was important because, once taken, it was the starting point for a general study of imperial strategy. Discussion now moved to the Army's next line of defence: the argument for a force of 90,000 men to be maintained at home and held ready for attacks on foreign colonies.[4] But the Navy argued against this

[1] Paper by War Office, 14 Feb. 1903. C.I.D. Records. Cab. 3/1, Paper 3A.
[2] Papers by D.N.I. 31 March 1903 and 14 July 1903. Ibid., Papers 11A, 16A.
[3] Memo by P.M., 11 Nov. 1903. C.I.D. Records. Ibid., Paper 18A.
[4] Memo by Chief of Staff, 15 Dec. 1904. Ibid., Paper 27A.

also[1]; and once again they were supported by the Prime Minister, who laid it down that the maintenance of a standing expeditionary force would not be worth the cost it would entail.[2] This decision drew a protest from Arnold-Forster, the War Secretary. He complained that it had not been made 'wholly on grounds of principle, but rather because it has become evident that in view of the great and growing demands of India all idea of providing such a force must be abandoned'.[3]

Arnold-Forster's protest gives the key to Balfour's strategy. His work on the Committee only confirmed him in the view, which he had already put forward in 1901, that it was in India that the Empire was most vulnerable. In his own words, 'the investigations we have undertaken on the subject of Imperial Defence seem to me to point unmistakably to the conclusion that the chief military problem which this country has to face is that of Indian, rather than of Home, Defence'.[4] Indian defence became the 'central element' in imperial defence,[5] in the light of whose requirements all other military problems must be judged.[6] Even Fisher thought Balfour was 'stupefied by the Indian Frontier Bogey', and attributed this mainly to the evil influence of Brodrick, who had succeeded Hamilton as Indian Secretary in 1903.[7]

Fisher's opposition arose out of the fact that it was the Army, not the Navy, which defended India; and Balfour, while rejecting the Army's demands at home, strove to meet the ever-increasing demands of the Indian Army. In 1900 the Government of India estimated that it would require 100,000 men as reinforcements on the outbreak of war with Russia[8] and, in spite of a protest from Roberts, the Commander-in-Chief, that the Army could spare no more than 48,000,[9] the Committee accepted this figure in June 1904.[10] The predominant place which this decision gave to India in the military organisation of the Empire is apparent from a paper

[1] Memo by D.N.I., 1 July 1903. Ibid., Paper 14A.
[2] Memo by P.M., 19 Dec. 1904. Ibid., Paper 28A.
[3] Remarks by Arnold-Forster, 19 Jan. 1905. Ibid., Paper 29A.
[4] Memo by P.M., 30 Nov. 1903. C.I.D. Records, Cab.6/1, Paper 34.
[5] Balfour to Hamilton, 11 Sept. 1903. Balfour MSS, Add. MSS 49978.
[6] Memo by Esher 1903 (no month). Balfour MSS, Add. MSS 49718.
[7] *Fear God and Dread Nought*, ed. A. J. Marder, vol, i, pp. 320–1, 323.
[8] From report of Committee on military defence of India, 24 Dec. 1901. C.I.D. Records, Cab. 6/1, Paper 1.
[9] Memo by Roberts, 23 March, 1904. Ibid., Paper 41.
[10] Minutes of 47th meeting, 22 June 1904. C.I.D. Records, Cab. 2/1.

circulated by Balfour in December 1904. The Empire needed, he wrote, 209,000 soldiers: 27,000 for home defence, 30,000 for colonial garrisons, 52,000 for the Indian garrisons, and 100,000 to be immediately ready to reinforce India.[1] Thus of the manpower available to the Army, three-quarters was devoted to Indian needs.

The growing strength of Russia made even this seem insufficient. The Committee had already been warned that the Orenburg-Tashkent railway, which was completed in October 1904, would 'add immensely to the danger to which India may be exposed'[2]; and at the beginning of 1904 a report, which he believed to be accurate, reached the Director of Military Intelligence that Russia was planning a connecting railway going right up to the Afghan frontier at Termez.[3] This expansion of the Russian railway system produced from Kitchener, the Indian Commander-in-Chief, a demand for a promise of reinforcements of 135,000,[4] later raised by Curzon, for technical reasons, to 143,000.[5] The General Staff declared in reply that if these new demands were met, the effect on the Home Army would be 'a sacrifice of the whole of our organisation, as well as our troops',[6] and the civilian members of the Committee, Austen Chamberlain, Brodrick, and even Balfour, also spoke against so great a drain on manpower.[7] But Balfour's own theories of imperial strategy made it difficult for him to resist Indian pressure. In February 1905 the General Staff acknowledged that the main issue of a war between Britain and Russia would be decided in or near Afghan territory, and that in such a conflict the Navy would count for little.[8] Then, on 12 April, the Committee, without reaching a definite decision, sanctioned the preparation by the General Staff of strategic plans based upon the despatch to India of the forces she demanded.[9]

The requirements of Indian defence determined policy in Persia

[1] Memo by P.M., 'Military needs of the Empire', 19 Dec. 1904. C.I.D. Records, Cab. 3/1, Paper 28A.
[2] See p. 4.
[3] Memo by D.M.I., 20 Jan. 1904. C.I.D. Records, Cab. 6/1. Paper 36.
[4] Telegram from Kitchener, 27 July 1904. C.I.D. Records, Cab. 6/2, Paper 64D.
[5] Précis of demands for reinforcements by the Government of India, Jan. 1905. Ibid., Paper 74D.
[6] Memo by General Staff, Nov. 1904. Ibid., Paper 72D.
[7] Minutes of 58th meeting, 22 Nov. 1904. C.I.D. records. Cab. 2/1.
[8] Memo by General Staff, 16 Feb. 1905. C.I.D. Records, Cab. 6/3, Paper 77D.
[9] Memo by General Staff, 'Successive demands for reinforcements of Government of India', 28 Feb. 1906. Ibid., Paper 91D.

and Afghanistan. 'The most fundamental fact', explained Balfour, 'is that the troops at our disposal are relatively few, the troops of Russia practically unlimited.' In his view, the main obstacle in the way of an advance by Russia was not so much the likely military resistance which Britain could offer as the difficulty of the country separating Russia from India. It therefore became the first object of British policy to preserve what he called the 'non-conducting' character of this intervening territory.[1] This new strategy implied a return to the policy of maintaining Persia as a buffer state in order to retain its 'non-conducting' properties. 'We must', wrote Balfour, 'continue our endeavours to support and, if possible, reform, the tottering fabric of the Persian monarchy and to retain our due share of influence over the policy of the Shah.' If Persia became completely Russianised, 'our Eastern possessions would no longer be a strength to the Empire but a burden and a weakness'. Britain must, therefore, be prepared to occupy Chahbar to prevent the Russians from occupying it or building a railway to it; and she must regard the occupation of Afghanistan as a *casus belli*. But it was important not to provoke Russia. He therefore rejected the favourite project of the Indian government, the construction of a railway from India to Seistan. It would, he explained, only produce a corresponding Russian advance, and this must be avoided at all costs. The best solution of the problem would be an agreement with Russia to defer all railway building in eastern Persia for as long as possible. Meanwhile, the Russians might be bought off by a purely commercial railway from north Persia to the western end of the Gulf, the southern half to be owned by Britain.[2]

Balfour's study of defence meant that he regarded Central Asia as Britain's most dangerous problem and Russia as her most dangerous enemy. He was anxious not to provoke Russia, and in both Persia and Afghanistan he hoped to ease the pressure on Britain by agreement with her. Yet he had no real faith in a lasting Anglo-Russian entente. Like at least two of his colleagues, Selborne and Hamilton, he had a feeling almost of helplessness as he watched the advance of the Russian colossus across Asia. 'I do not personally believe', he told Selborne, 'that Russia is vulnerable in any

[1] Memo by P.M., 30 April 1903. C.I.D. Records, Cab. 6/1, Paper 12.
[2] Memos by P.M., 20 May and 24 Nov. 1903 and 22 April 1904. Ibid., Papers 21, 32, 46.

mortal spot except her Exchequer.'[1] Although, therefore, he generally supported Lansdowne's search for an accommodation, he had no faith that it could permanently halt that inexorable advance. He explained to Lansdowne in December 1903 that there were many difficulties in the way of a lasting entente.

> The first is the little confidence that experience shows us can be placed in Russian assurances. They may be sincere at the moment, but they are purely temporary in their operation. . . . [Moreover,] if such an arrangement could be based on mutual local advantages it would contain some guarantee of stability. If any infraction by Russia for her own advantage could be immediately replied to by an infraction of it in some other respect to our advantage, Russia might have strong motives to keep it unbroken. Unfortunately, this is not the case. There is really nothing in the way of territory which Russia possesses and we desire. In the Far East we are not an expansive power. We want no territory that we have not already got and our one object is to make that secure. Russia, on the other hand, whether wisely or unwisely in her own interests, is still pressing forward eastward and southward. . . .
>
> The result of this is that Russia's game in the Far East is a very much easier one than that which we have to play. Petty acts of bad faith, taken each by themselves, supply very poor reasons for plunging the world into war, yet if they are condoned they mount up to what is, in its cumulative effect, a serious menace to the British Empire and in the meanwhile it seems extremely difficult to erect any diplomatic barrier in front of this slowly-creeping tide. We have nothing to give and nothing to take away. The situation, therefore, hardly supplies the elements of a bargain. We cannot, for instance, say to Russia, 'It is not worth your while appropriating a portion of China because if you do we will appropriate another portion', and it is no use, because Russia does want a portion of China and we do not. In the same way, it is no use saying to Russia, 'If you insist on taking part of North Persia or Afghanistan we will make a corresponding advance in the south'; for while Russia's aggression would add to her strength, such a change would leave us in a much worse strategical position than that which we now occupy.
>
> For the reasons thus briefly indicated I am not hopeful of a thoroughly satisfactory permanent arrangement. Temporary arrangements, however, are better than nothing; they smooth things for the time being. If an evil day is to come, they at least postpone it and in the meantime much may happen. But our only permanent security seems to be to lay down, wherever possible, as regards all the essentials of our Eastern position,

[1] Balfour to Selborne, 6 April 1904. Balfour MSS, Add. MSS 49707.

certain well-defined principles, (e.g. the integrity of Afghanistan) which, if broken, we should regard as a 'casus belli'. These are the only principles governing our relations in Asia which are likely to be permanently observed, and which, unfortunately, are not easy to formulate. Non-interference with Afghanistan is a case where a clear-cut arrangement, supported by this ultimate sanction, can be arrived at, though even in the case of Afghanistan, as is shown in the report on Indian Defence, very embarrassing difficulties might easily arise.[1] But in Persia these difficulties are always with us and it is not easy—perhaps it is not possible—to find some definite ground of understanding at once so clear in itself, and of such obvious importance to our Imperial interests that the British people would consent to make its attempted infraction at once regarded as a sufficient ground for putting forward their whole strength in its defence.[2]

2

While Balfour and the Committee of Imperial Defence were sure that Britain's most formidable rival was Russia, the staff of the Foreign Office were growing increasingly convinced that it was Germany. Even during the winter of 1900–1 they had been suspicious of the pro-German policy of their political masters, and after 1901 an anti-German tide set in and flowed increasingly strongly, far more strongly than in the Cabinet itself. The diplomats represented much more closely than the politicians the view of the press and the vocal part of public opinion.

The change was inextricably bound up with personal rivalries inside the Office and the changes of position among its leading members. When Lansdowne became Foreign Secretary he inherited as his Permanent Under-Secretary Sir Thomas Sanderson, an official of long experience who had worked closely with Rosebery and Salisbury. Under Sanderson were three Assistant Under-Secretaries: Bertie, Villiers, and Gosselin. Of these three only Bertie possessed any real influence, but his was very great, perhaps greater than that of Sanderson himself; it was probably from him that the idea of a Japanese alliance originated. Sanderson and Bertie were sharply contrasted in temperament and policy and felt

[1] Devonshire thought the support of the country could not necessarily be relied upon if a Russian invasion of Afghanistan was made a *casus belli*. Devonshire to Balfour, 21 March 1903. Balfour MSS, Add. MSS 49769.

[2] Balfour to Lansdowne, 21 Dec. 1903. Balfour MSS, Add. MSS 49728.

strong mutual dislike[1]. Bertie was brusque, peremptory, rather arrogant—'a master in the art of quarrelling', according to one of his subordinates[2]—and given to extreme policies. He despised Sanderson as old-fashioned, timid, and bureaucratic, and regarded himself as a crusader for a more vigorous and expeditious régime. Sanderson was no doubt fussy and set in his ways,[3] and was generally unpopular in the Office; but he always advocated a cautious and unemotional policy and abhorred the extreme hostility to Germany in which his subordinates indulged more and more. Sanderson retained to the end a remarkably sympathetic understanding of German policy.

Bertie, in opposition to Sanderson, became the leader of the party hostile to Germany and gathered round himself a number of the younger members of the Office who shared his views, of whom the foremost were Charles Hardinge and Louis Mallet. All three saw the French entente as directed against Germany. 'What an effect it will have in Europe and how the Germans will hate it!' wrote Hardinge,[4] and when he went to St Petersburg as Ambassador he saw himself as involved, with the French as his allies, in a competition with Germany for the all-important friendship of Russia.[5] The most virulent of the anti-German party was Mallet, who in 1904 began a long correspondence with Bertie, by then an Ambassador. When Austria and Italy accepted the Khedivial Decree in that year, Mallet rejoiced that 'those damned Germans are left in the lurch again', and he believed generally that 'a close understanding with France is a great safeguard for us—and that our object ought to be to keep Germany isolated in view of her nefarious projects with regard to the Austrian Empire and Holland, to say nothing of this country'.[6] Bertie replied that 'your letter . . . breathes distrust of Germany and you are right. She has never done anything for us but bleed us. She is false and grasping and our real enemy commercially and politically.' He too believed that 'we have nothing to fear from Germany if we remain on good

[1] Sanderson's letters to Lascelles and Bertie's to Hardinge contain frequent evidence of this dislike.

[2] Rennell Rodd, *Social and Diplomatic Memories, 1902–1919*, p. 41. Lord Vansittart, *The Mist Procession*, pp. 54–5, also contains an amusing character-sketch of Bertie.

[3] But his letters also exhibit a delightful sense of humour, while Bertie's are quite humourless. See also Vansittart, op. cit., p. 45.

[4] C. Hardinge to Bertie, 11 March 1904. Bertie MSS, Series B.

[5] See pp. 165, 215.

[6] Mallet to Bertie, 2 June 1904. Bertie MSS, Series A.

terms with France. She cannot without the active support of a naval Power such as France injure us.'[1]

The Foreign Office became increasingly anti-German after 1901 because the power and influence of Bertie's party steadily grew. They owed their elevation not to the approval of Lansdowne or the Cabinet but to the support of the King. Edward VII was very far from being consistently anti-German. His interest was in people, not in policies; and he supported Bertie and Hardinge because he found them personally congenial. Although Edward VII had little influence over policy, the monarch traditionally took a close interest in diplomatic appointments; and in any case, with Bertie and Hardinge already recommended by their obvious ability, Lansdowne did not feel strongly enough to force a quarrel by opposing the King's wishes. The King's intervention could usually turn the scales; and Bertie and Hardinge, realising this, were careful to cultivate his friendship.

Their first attempt to work through him was, however, a failure. When an Assistant Under-Secretaryship fell vacant in July 1902 on Gosselin's appointment as Minister at Lisbon Bertie intrigued for the vacant post to be given to Hardinge, still only Secretary at St Petersburg. But he was unsuccessful, and the post went to F. A. Campbell, a Senior Clerk. Bertie explained to his friend that 'the King cannot well intervene in what is really only a departmental matter' and that 'Lord L. is bound by the red tapeism of this Office'.[2] After this initial setback, Bertie's efforts were more successful. The Embassy at Rome was about to fall vacant, and this time the King won his point and persuaded a doubtful Lansdowne to appoint Bertie to the post.[3] Knollys, the King's Secretary and a close friend of Bertie's, even promised to support him for the succession to the Permanent Under-Secretaryship when Sanderson retired.[4] Bertie's promotion, which became official in January 1903, left his place in the Foreign Office to be filled, and both he and the King successfully supported the candidature of Hardinge to this.[5]

[1] Bertie to Mallet, 11 June 1904. Ibid.
[2] Bertie to Hardinge, 25 July 1902. Ibid. Hardinge MSS, vol. iii.
[3] Knollys to Bertie, 5 Nov. and 19 Dec. 1902. Bertie MSS, Series A. Sanderson too hinted that the appointment had been pressed by the King in his letter of 31 December 1902 to Lascelles (Lascelles MSS, vol. iii, Part 2). In 1904 Bertie told Mallet from Rome that Lansdowne 'did not mean me to come here' (see p. 102).
[4] Knollys to Bertie, 14 Oct. 1902. Bertie MSS, Series A.
[5] Knollys to Hardinge, 15 Jan. 1903. Hardinge MSS, vol. iii.

Two of the greatest prizes in the foreign service now lay ahead: the Embassies at Paris and St Petersburg, from which Monson and Scott were shortly to retire. To obtain them, Bertie and Hardinge set to work in the same way. Hardinge, now in London, pressed upon the King his absent friend's claim to the Paris Embassy, the most desirable post in the service, as well as his own to the St Petersburg Embassy.[1] Once again the King agreed to support both claims and worked upon Lansdowne as the two men wished.[2] Lansdowne, although reluctant to lose Hardinge's help at home,[3] consented to his Russian appointment in April 1904; but the opposition to Bertie's promotion was greater. Hardinge promised his friend that he would 'keep him [the King] up to the mark' and told how he 'dinned into him that there is *nobody* else'.[4] There was, he told Bertie, opposition 'at the top of the F.O.' to his going to Paris, but he was 'quite convinced that the King will override it all'.[5]

Bertie thought he knew the source of the opposition. 'I know that I am not the so-called "Foreign Office candidate" any more than I was so for this Embassy. The little man Lord L. did not mean me to come here, and does not want me to go to Paris.'[6] But Hardinge's prediction was proved true, and in August 1904 the King at last got his way. 'I well know that it is entirely due to Your Majesty's gracious advocacy that I have been offered the appointment', wrote Bertie to him at once.[7] Meanwhile Mallet had become précis writer, or assistant secretary, to Lansdowne.

Thus by 1905 the leaders of the new generation in the Foreign Office had established themselves in the Embassies to France and Russia, positions from which they could exercise great influence on policy—and from which they could also obtain the succession to Sanderson, who was due to retire in 1906. This victory for the anti-German party did not depend solely on internal intrigue, and Bertie, Hardinge, and Mallet were increasingly joined by other officials (Crowe, Nicolson, and Spicer) who had not been their

[1] Hardinge to Bertie, 4 Dec. 1903. Bertie MSS, Series A.
[2] Knollys to Bertie, 23 Dec. 1903. Bertie MSS, Series A. Hardinge to Bertie, 14 Feb. 1904. Ibid.
[3] Hardinge to Bertie, 4 Dec. 1903. Bertie MSS, Series A.
[4] Hardinge to Bertie, 2 Jan. 1904. Ibid., Series B.
[5] Hardinge to Bertie, 14 Feb. 1904. Bertie MSS, Series A.
[6] Bertie to Mallet, 11 June 1904. Ibid.
[7] Bertie to the King, 11 Aug. 1904. Ibid.

allies in conflicts inside the Office but did, in varying degrees, share their suspicion of Germany. But it was in the persons of Bertie and Hardinge that this general anti-German movement attained power. Sanderson remained sympathetic to Germany, but he grew more and more isolated.

6

1903 and the Turn to France and Russia

1

At the end of 1902 attention was suddenly and unexpectedly diverted from Asia to America. The South American republic of Venezuela had for some years been provoking the European Powers, refusing to pay debts to British and German nationals and attacking their shipping. At length, in July 1902, the Germans proposed joint coercion of her by the two Powers.[1] Lansdowne rejected this at the time, but when the Venezuelans remained obstinate he took up the idea and recommended it to the Cabinet on 17 October. The acquiescence of the United States could, he assured them, be counted upon.[2] The Cabinet agreed, the Germans accepted, and on 10 December ships of the two Powers moved into position off the Venezuelan coast to begin a blockade. Within a few days Venezuelan ships had been captured and a Venezuelan port bombarded. At once, however, these actions produced ominous signs of resentment in the United States. On 16 December Sir Michael Herbert, the Ambassador in Washington, reported growing feeling against the two Powers but especially against Germany; Anglophile Americans, he declared, regretted Britain's co-operation with the Germans.[3]

This at once changed the episode from a minor debt-collecting expedition into an incident of international importance. The position was all the more delicate because Anglo-American relations, though still good, were extremely precarious. The dispute over the boundary between Alaska and Canada had been taken up at the beginning of the year, but no settlement had been reached, and by October Herbert was reporting that the Senate was inclined to be

[1] B.D. II.171.
[2] Memo by Lansdowne, 17 Oct. 1902. J. Chamberlain MSS, Box JC 14/4.
[3] B.D. II.180.

'ugly'.[1] With some difficulty, conciliatory influences on both sides had arranged the appointment of an impartial tribunal, not to arbitrate, but to place a reasoned opinion on record.[2] This proposal Lansdowne accepted officially on 6 December,[3] but the members of the tribunal, which the Americans had only accepted with reluctance, had not even been appointed when the Venezuelan blockade began.

The delicate state of relations with the United States intensified the outcry which now began in Britain against co-operation with Germany. A vituperative campaign followed, reaching its height in the publication of a bitterly anti-German poem by Rudyard Kipling. Metternich said he had never, since he first knew Britain, known such hostility to any nation.[4] The public outcry was matched by opposition in government circles. Herbert told Lansdowne flatly that he wished the two Powers were not co-operating[5]; and when the initial United States reaction was directed against Germany he confessed to regarding it with 'malevolent satisfaction'.[6] There was also powerful opposition inside the Cabinet. Joseph Chamberlain, then in South Africa, wrote to his son Austen:

> I warned Lansdowne before leaving that joint action with Germany would be unpopular and I very much regret that we did not go into the matter alone. I do not however know all the circumstances and I see that one result is to make the relations between the U.S. and Germany rather strained.[7]

Hamilton also deplored the policy of 'endangering our good relations with the United States to cooperate with so faithless an ally as Germany'[8]; generally an admirer of the Foreign Secretary, he now believed that 'Lansdowne was for once caught napping'.[9] Indeed, this seems to have been the majority opinion in the Cabinet. The need for cordial relations with the United States was the one principle of foreign policy on which Balfour, Chamberlain, and

[1] Herbert to Lansdowne, 24 Oct. 1902. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xxviii.
[2] Herbert to Lansdowne, 17 Oct. 1902. F.O. Print ('Boundary between the British possessions in North America and the territory of Alaska'), vol. 7932, No. 37.
[3] Lansdowne to Herbert, 6 Dec. 1902. Ibid., No. 47.
[4] G.P. XVII.5104.
[5] Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 256. [6] Ibid.
[7] Joseph to Austen Chamberlain, 9 Jan. 1903. A. Chamberlain MSS, Box AC 8, Package 8a.
[8] Hamilton to Curzon, 19 Dec. 1902. Hamilton MSS, Letters to Curzon, vol. iv.
[9] Hamilton to Curzon, 24 Dec. 1902. Ibid.

Lansdowne himself agreed; according to Hamilton, Lansdowne's policy was only accepted by the Cabinet because it was preoccupied with the Education Bill.[1] Lansdowne on the other hand deplored the outburst of Germanophobia. 'The anti-German feeling here', he told Herbert, 'has been furious and unreasoning and has I think produced a profound impression on the German mind. It has however, been allowed to go much too far. Kipling's poem was an outrage.'[2] He also believed that the Germans had 'on the whole behaved well',[3] and in 1905 still remembered that 'the Germans upon the whole ran straight as far as we were concerned'.[4] This was to be only the first indication of Lansdowne's dislike of excessive Germanophobia.

What might have been a serious conflict was averted when on 17 December the Venezuelans, alarmed by the preliminary measures of the two Powers, expressed a wish to go to arbitration.[5] After consulting the Germans, Lansdowne accepted arbitration,[6] and during January preliminary negotiations took place at Washington between Bowen, the American Minister at Caracas, who represented Venezuela, and the British and German Ambassadors. But agreement remained out of reach, and while it did so American opinion became more excited with every day that passed. By 7 February Herbert was telling Lansdowne that in American opinion the time had almost come for Britain to choose 'between the friendship of the United States and that of Germany'.[7] Again according to Herbert, Britain, whose claims would have been accepted by Bowen, was only held back by her support of the more extreme German demands[8]; and when the unhappy Lansdowne, who wished to remain loyal to Germany without antagonising the United States, proposed reference to The Hague, Herbert at once rejected this course as 'folly'.[9] Lansdowne had no alternative now but to bring pressure on Germany to abate her claims and on 11 February frankly told Metternich that 'public opinion in this

[1] Hamilton to Curzon, 19 Dec. 1902. Ibid. Lansdowne admitted to Metternich that feeling in the Cabinet was strong (G.P. XVII.5125). Metternich also heard on good authority that the King was against the expedition (ibid., 5123), and when he visited him at Windsor, found him to be under the influence of the newspaper polemics (ibid., 5140).

[2] Lansdowne to Herbert, 2 Jan. 1903, Lansdowne MSS, vol. xxviii.

[3] Lansdowne to Herbert, 20 Feb. 1902. Ibid. [4] See p. 179.

[5] Lansdowne to Herbert, 17 Dec. 1902. F.O. Print (Venezuela), vol. 8048, No. 575. [6] Ibid., Nos. 575, 589.

[7] B.D. II.199. [8] Ibid. [9] B.D. II.198–9.

country would not tolerate that the present situation should be prolonged by an endeavour to obtain for Germany still more favourable terms'.[1] It was unfortunate that on the next day Venezuela gave way to the German demands.[2] The final protocol could then be signed on 13 February.

The Venezuelan episode revealed more clearly than ever before the extent of anti-German feeling in the country and even in the Cabinet. Lansdowne deplored its excesses, but he also became increasingly afraid of it; and it was shared by Chamberlain and a growing number of diplomats. Hamilton probably best summed up the meaning of the whole affair when he wrote that 'it conclusively disposes of any idea of our being able to form or make any alliance with them for the future'.[3]

It is from this period too that there comes the first reliable evidence that Chamberlain had turned to a policy of settlement with the Dual Alliance. In January 1902 Eckardstein reported that he had heard him discussing Egypt and Morocco with Cambon[4]; but Eckardstein's evidence is notoriously untrustworthy. In the following months he had become increasingly anti-German, but there is still no sure evidence that he wished to turn to France and Russia. Indeed in August he was still emotionally attached to the old ideal of Splendid Isolation. 'I think that Great Britain is never so weak as when she is afraid to meet any adversary on equal terms. . . . If the worst came to the worst we could hold out, as our ancestors did, against the whole of them.'[5] It was not until the autumn that he began definitely to move towards France and Russia. In September he told Eckardstein that anti-German feeling in the country was now so strong that the Cabinet could not resist it[6]; in October Selborne circulated his memorandum on the German Navy and the Germans attacked the British position in the Yangtze, an area in which Chamberlain had always taken a special interest. Then in December, passing through Egypt on his way to South Africa, he told Cromer, for transmission to the French Minister in Cairo, that he was now convinced that Britain must give up Splendid Isolation. He had first approached Germany, but Anglophobia

[1] Lansdowne to Herbert, 11 Feb. 1903. F.O. Print (Venezuela), vol. 8184, No. 101.
[2] Herbert to Lansdowne, 12 Feb. 1903. Ibid., No. 113.
[3] Hamilton to Curzon, 31 Dec. 1902. Hamilton MSS, Letters to Curzon, vol. iv.
[4] Amery, *Joseph Chamberlain*, p. 180.
[5] Chamberlain to Devonshire, 22 Sept. 1902. Devonshire MSS, 340. 2890.
[6] G.P. XVII.5094.

there and commercial rivalry made an agreement with her impossible. Settlement with Russia was also out of the question because of the long history of conflict between the two countries and the many differences between them. There remained only France; and, said Chamberlain, he had therefore been pressing in the Cabinet for a French settlement.[1] Confirmation of this report comes in a letter to his son in January in which he discussed a rumour that Delcassé would leave office.

> He seems to me to have done much to make possible an 'entente cordiale' with France, which is what I should now like. I wonder whether Lansdowne has ever considered the possibility of the King asking the President to England this year.[2]

By the beginning of 1903, therefore, Chamberlain was advocating an entente with France which was to be not merely a settlement of colonial differences but also an arrangement for general diplomatic co-operation. And no doubt he hoped that, at least in part, such a combination would be directed against Germany.

Balfour and Lansdowne did not share this view; but British weakness in Central Asia was driving them towards an accommodation with the other partner in the Dual Alliance. When, therefore, a hint of an overture came from the Russians, Lansdowne accepted it eagerly. On 25 December Scott reported an interview which he had had with Count Benckendorff, who was soon to go to London as the new Ambassador there. Scott told him that Britain was ready to consider Russia's request for direct relations with Afghanistan with sympathy, and declared that, if the two Powers failed to reach an agreement, 'instead of . . . cooperating as the Russian memorandum desired, and we earnestly desired, in the task of promoting the peace and prosperity of Central Asia, we should be exhibiting ourselves to our less civilized Eastern neighbours as jealous rivals which could be profitably played off one against the other'. Benckendorff in reply 'agreed with all that I had said about the necessity of coming to a frank and friendly understanding' and promised to 'use all his influence in that sense'. He assured Scott that Russia would not enter into any relations with the Afghans without Britain's consent.[3]

[1] D.D.F. II.524. [2] Amery, *Joseph Chamberlain*, p. 206.
[3] Scott to Lansdowne, 25 Dec. 1902. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xxiv.

Lansdowne replied that the letter had 'an importance which it is impossible to overestimate'.[1] The Cabinet had already decided that agreement with Russia was the best way out of the immediate difficulties in Persia and Afghanistan, and Curzon was firmly told that he should 'take it for granted that it will be impossible ultimately to avoid some arrangement of the kind indicated [by Scott]'.[2] There was only one important dissentient apart from Curzon—Edward VII. He still favoured a stronger policy, and wrote to Lansdowne:

> The sending an agent at all is most dangerous and I cannot see how we can allow it. How can we also be made to believe that the relations desired will be *non*-political and solely to deal with local and commercial matters on the Frontier? Would Russia believe in our honesty if we told her we were sending an agent with those instructions? My answer is *certainly not*.[3]

Curzon maintained his view. 'Russia', he wrote, 'has no conceivable advantage in making a settlement with us. The latter can only mean a surrender of a portion of her ambitions.'[4]

In the Cabinet, some members, like Balfour and Selborne, were sceptical about the possibility of a permanent settlement, but all were agreed that the attempt was well worth making and that the Viceroy's forward policy must be overruled. Balfour, Chamberlain, and Lansdowne had already decided that it would be prudent for Britain to withdraw, if she could, from her exposed position in Afghanistan. Hamilton began, immediately after the receipt of Scott's letter, to advocate an agreement with Russia. 'Time is on Russia's side; the longer we delay coming to an arrangement, the worse the settlement for us will be.'[5] Germany and France could be reached by sea and so 'a firm and resolute, and if you like even truculent,' attitude to them was possible; but the Russian Empire was 'practically impenetrable to attack'.[6]

Selborne shared this alarm, so widespread in the Cabinet, at the military might of Russia. 'The Middle Eastern question is', he declared, 'the question of the future.' He warned Curzon that

[1] Lansdowne to Scott, 29 Dec. 1902. Ibid.
[2] Enclosure in I.O. to F.O. 30 Dec. 1902. F.O. 65/1655.
[3] Sir Sidney Lee, *King Edward VII: A Biography*, vol. ii, p. 280.
[4] Ronaldshay, *Lord Curzon*, vol. ii, p. 312.
[5] Hamilton to Curzon, 6 Jan. 1903. Hamilton MSS, Letters to Curzon, vol. v.
[6] Hamilton to Curzon, 8 April 1903. Ibid.

'financial considerations will have to play a continuously larger part' in determining British policy there. Naval estimates were high but must continue to increase, not only to fight France and Russia but also to 'have something in hand against Germany'. Selborne added on the German Navy: '[It] is becoming very formidable and you will observe that a struggle of Germany against France and Russia can only be decided by armies on land and that the whole German Navy is a deduction from what might otherwise have been a still larger and still more powerful German Army. Without losing one's judgment and balance altogether like Leo Maxse and the National Review certain conclusions force themselves upon one.' Naval estimates must, therefore, continue to rise, and Britain must reduce her military commitments.

> We have had three exceptions to our naval and insular character: in three continents we had military frontiers with great land Powers. The U.S. is great in every sense and America and Canada join frontiers; the Dutch republics were locally great and militarily powerful in South Africa; Russia is Russia in Central Asia. Our diplomacy ought to save us from war with the U.S., the Dutch republics are eliminated, but we remain with all the difficulties and responsibilities of a military Power in Asia. That is the crux for us. . . . It is a terrific task to remain the greatest naval Power when naval Powers are year by year increasing in numbers and in naval strength and at the same time to be a military Power strong enough to meet the greatest military Power in Asia.[1]

The need for economy was also pressed on the Cabinet by Ritchie, the Chancellor of the Exchequer. In a memorandum in February he showed that since 1899 expenditure (excluding non-recurring war costs) had risen by £30,000,000 from £120,000,000 to £150,000,000, revenue by £42,500,000, from £120,500,000 to £163,000,000. But of the rise in revenue, £34,000,000 had come from special war taxes, which had, therefore, been almost absorbed by the increase in ordinary peace-time expenditure. Unless there was to be a violent reaction against the costs of defence, economies must be made at once; they could, Ritchie suggested, come only from the Army.[2] And of course the government was just starting to become aware of the great burden imposed on the

[1] Selborne to Curzon, 4 Jan. 1903. Curzon MSS, Box S, Part 2.
[2] Cabinet memo by Ritchie, 21 Feb. 1903. A. Chamberlain MSS, Box AC 17, Package 59.

Army by the defence of India. Hamilton told Curzon at the end of February how the studies of the Committee of Imperial Defence had brought home to the Cabinet, and especially Brodrick, Selborne, Lansdowne, and Ritchie, 'a fuller sense of Britain's liability in the event of war with Russia and the magnitude of the military assistance which India would undoubtedly require'.[1]

Lansdowne therefore had the full backing of the Cabinet in his Russian negotiations. Benckendorff, when he arrived in Britain in January, told Lansdowne that 'nothing would give him greater pleasure than to effect a frank exchange of views in regard to any subjects in which both Russia and this country were concerned', and Lansdowne agreed to take part in such a discussion 'without reticences'. They agreed to begin with the question of Russo-Afghan relations, on which Benckendorff suggested an arrangement which Lansdowne found worthy of 'attentive examination'.[2]

The beginning of a *rapprochement* to France had by chance taken place at almost the same time. Ever since he had become Foreign Secretary, Lansdowne had done his best to ignore the Moroccan problem. In the middle of December he had evaded yet another approach from Cambon.[3] But then, at the end of the month, Morocco itself suddenly exploded. A rebellion against the Sultan, led by a pretender who claimed to be his brother, had long been gathering force, and on 27 December news arrived in London of a crushing defeat inflicted upon the government forces. Nicolson believed that the dynasty might fall.[4] Five British ships were hastily sent to Gibraltar to protect British residents[5]; and arrangements were made for the Sultan's flight.[6] All the problems which Lansdowne had hoped to avoid came crowding upon him: the Moroccan Empire might fall apart completely; or a new dynasty with a new, and perhaps vigorously xenophobic, policy might ascend the throne; and, in either case, some form of European intervention to protect European nationals would become necessary.

A decision was forced upon Lansdowne; and it was one that he had to take not coolly and reflectively but in great haste. The

[1] Hamilton to Curzon, 27 Feb. 1903. Hamilton MSS, Letters to Curzon, vol. v.
[2] Lansdowne to Scott, 21 Jan. 1903, despatch No. 14A. F.O. 65/1658.
[3] D.D.F. II.529. Cambon, *Correspondance*, vol. ii, pp. 80, 82, 83.
[4] Nicolson to Lansdowne, 27 Dec. 1902. F.O. Print (Morocco), vol. 8077, No. 260.
[5] Nicolson to Lansdowne, 29 Dec. 1902. Ibid., No. 267.
[6] Nicolson to Lansdowne, 29 Dec. 1902. Ibid., No. 268.

dangers were very great. Nicolson warned him that 'the Moroccan question will be opened in a most complicated form'.[1] It was probably with some relief that he heard Cambon assure him on the 29th that France now wished to maintain the status quo, opposed intervention by any one Power, and suggested consultation between 'the Powers interested' if intervention did become necessary. But the French demanded a price. Cambon laid 'great stress' on the need to restrict intervention to the Powers directly concerned, and when asked whom he wished to exclude, 'he answered without hesitation that Germany was the Power which he had in his mind and which the French Government would like to exclude'. Lansdowne replied that it would certainly be desirable 'to restrict as closely as possible the number of intervening Powers'.[2] By Cambon's account, but not by his own, Lansdowne also warned that 'il faut maintenir à tout prix le "status quo" car un partage susciterait des compétitions et il serait bien difficile de ne pas donner son morceau à l'Empereur d'Allemagne.'[3]

Everything pointed to the acceptance of Cambon's offer. Since the Moroccan question had raised itself, the immediate need was to keep the ensuing complications to a minimum. Britain's international position had become much more precarious since Cambon's overture in July, and it was especially important not to antagonise France, the only European Power with whom relations were friendly, and the ally of Russia. The decision required was an immediate one, and the most pressing danger was of the break with France that Lansdowne had been trying to avoid since 1900; and Monson had warned Lansdowne more than once that France would fight for Morocco. Relations with Germany were poor; her interest in Morocco was doubtful; and Lansdowne was at that moment under heavy attack for co-operating with her in Venezuela. To stand out for German rights in Morocco would be to invite certain trouble from the French, from public opinion, and from his own Germanophobe colleagues. He therefore decided to take the course of least resistance and work with France. At first it was only a tentative, provisional, decision forced on him by circumstances; only later could it be seen that it was the first move towards an entente.

[1] Nicolson to Lansdowne, 28 Dec. 1902, Lansdowne MSS, vol. xix.
[2] B.D. II.330. [3] D.D.F. II.552.

Lansdowne therefore informed Balfour on 1 January 1903 that he was ready to tell the French that Britain would work with them and the Spanish. If a fourth Power tried to join, 'we should have to consider its proposals and confer as to the manner in which they might be received'.[1] Balfour in reply stressed the temporary and qualified nature of this arrangement.

> As regards Morocco, I entirely sympathize with what appears to be now the French policy, that of keeping European intervention within the narrowest limits. If Germany *does* insist on coming in, perhaps it might be worth considering whether the best reply would not be that, if that be so, it must be made a European question, and all the Great Powers must be asked to help. I do not imagine that this would suit the German game and it certainly would not suit the French game if they desired at any subsequent period to go back to their August policy of dividing up Morocco into spheres of influence between themselves and Spain and us.
>
> From our point of view, however, I am rather inclined to think that the more intervention in the affairs of these semi-barbarous States (when it becomes inevitable) is made a matter of European concern, the better.[2]

Balfour's letter shows that there was no thought in his mind of surrendering to French aspirations in Morocco or of excluding Germany. But in the following months, the initial decision once taken, Britain was slowly driven in that direction. The first reason was that Germany did not challenge the new arrangement, not even when a joint Anglo-Franco-Spanish loan to the Moors was being negotiated. On the other hand, Lansdowne was still careful to assert British interests in Morocco. When, in February, he detected some signs that the French would try to keep the loan entirely in their own hands, he instructed Nicolson to bring a British offer before the Sultan at once.[3] He was even ready to offer Sir Ernest Cassel, the British financier involved, a pledge of support which contemplated the use of force and not necessarily with French approval; but this had to be withdrawn at the demand of Balfour and Ritchie, who feared the commitment and expense.[4] In the end three separate loans were arranged by Britain, France, and Spain; but they were all of the same size, and all on the same terms.

[1] Lansdowne to Balfour, 1 Jan. 1903. Balfour MSS, Add. MSS 49728.
[2] Balfour to Lansdowne, 2 Jan. 1903. Ibid.
[3] Lansdowne to Nicolson, telegram No. 10, 11 Feb. 1903. F.O. 99/430.
[4] Lansdowne to Esher, 19 Feb. 1903, and minutes by Lansdowne, Balfour, and Ritchie. F.O. 99/430.

Lansdowne was still reserved in conversation with Cambon. On 4 February the Ambassador spoke of the prudence of making plans for the breakdown of the status quo and told Lansdowne that 'we had only to say the word and the French government would gladly resume the discussion'.[1] But Lansdowne did not respond to this hint. At the same time he was resisting pressure by Spain to join her in discussions which might have tended in an anti-French direction.[2] He was still trying to save something from the wreck of his old policy of inactivity.

The month of December 1902 had seen the beginnings, however tentative, of the system of ententes. How far were they directed against Germany? For a growing party in the Foreign Office and probably for Chamberlain also they were instruments of general diplomatic co-operation, valuable as a check on Germany. But the policy of Balfour and Lansdowne was much more a response to the needs of the moment. It was knowledge of British weakness in Central Asia and Morocco that was bringing them to the realisation that traditional policies must be given up and some form of compromise with France and Russia sought. Fear of Germany was of only indirect importance. It added to the already heavy strain on the British position and contributed to the background of uneasiness in their minds. It is very easy to see this happening in the case of Selborne: the need to consider the German Navy as a possible enemy, although it was still smaller than the French or Russian, made an already difficult task impossible. If relations with Germany had been better, Britain might not have felt so uneasy; but she could not face the potential hostility of all three European Great Powers. Knowledge of this gave added impetus to the search for local settlements. But these local settlements were already necessary on their own account; fear of Germany, if it was there at all, was only at the back of Balfour's or Lansdowne's mind, and was much less than fear of Russia. They had no intention of 'encircling' Germany.

2

During the first few months of 1903 the movement towards agreement with Russia continued slowly but steadily. Benckendorff ad-

[1] Lansdowne to Monson, despatch No. 55, 4 Feb. 1903. Ibid.
[2] B.D. II.332–3.

mitted on 8 April that before Russia could open relations with the Afghans she must first obtain Britain's consent.[1] In Persia, the British position improved when a small loan was granted in April through the Imperial Bank[2]; but Lansdowne directed that none of the concessions demanded in return should be in the north, where he wished to leave Russia a free hand.[3] When Hardinge advised, for tactical reasons, a lien on the Caspian Fisheries, Lansdowne only consented on condition that he could later make a concession of it.[4]

It was in Tibet that the real test for his new policy came. For some time there had been widespread rumours of growing Russian influence in the country, even of the imminent declaration of a Russian Protectorate. Both the India Office and the Government of India believed that there was some truth in them[5]; and on 8 January Curzon proposed the despatch to Lhasa of a commercial mission with an armed escort.[6] Hamilton supported him because Tibet was the one part of Central Asia accessible to Britain but not to Russia.[7] But meanwhile Benckendorff, challenged by Lansdowne about the stories of Russian penetration, had given his opinion that they were untrue and had agreed to make enquiries at St Petersburg.[8] When, therefore, the Cabinet met on 19 February they were in no mood to listen to Curzon's proposals. Hamilton, advocating them at a preliminary meeting with Balfour, Devonshire, Lansdowne, and Ritchie, found them 'almost spontaneously and unanimously rejected': Balfour disliked the violation of Chinese integrity and Lansdowne would do nothing until Benckendorff's answer was received, while the Cabinet as a whole were opposed to any action which 'would raise in other parts of the world international complications and embarrassments or lead to Russia retaliating in other parts of Asia where her influence and material forces are stronger than our own'.[9] Indeed, the Cabinet instructed Lansdowne 'to see whether some "modus vivendi"

[1] Lansdowne to Scott, 8 April 1903. F.O. Print (Central Asia), vol. 8263, No. 61.
[2] Sir A. Hardinge to Lansdowne, 9 April 1903. F.O. Print (Persia), vol. 8378, No. 44.
[3] Lansdowne to Hardinge, 30 March 1903. F.O. Print (Persia), vol. 8377, No. 537.
[4] Lansdowne to Hardinge, 3 April 1903. Ibid., vol. 8378, No. 13.
[5] A. Lamb, *Britain and Chinese Central Asia*, pp. 275-6.
[6] Ibid., pp. 280–2.
[7] Hamilton to Curzon, 28 Jan. and 20 Feb. 1903. Hamilton MSS, Letters to Curzon, vol. v.
[8] Lansdowne to Scott, 18 Feb. 1903. F.O. Print (Central Asia), vol. 8263, No. 25.
[9] Hamilton to Curzon, 20 Feb. 1903, Hamilton MSS, Letters to Curzon, vol. v.

could not be arrived at which would diminish this perpetual friction between the two Powers in Central Asia'.[1] This forbearance seemed justified when the Russian answer arrived on 8 April. Benckendorff assured Lansdowne that Russia had no agreement with Tibet, had no agent at Lhasa, and did not intend to send one there. Russian policy in fact 'ne viserait le Tibet en aucun cas'; but if the status quo there were seriously threatened she would have to take countervailing action elsewhere—as the Cabinet had feared. Lansdowne in reply disclaimed any intention to annex the country, but insisted, without dissent from Benckendorff, on 'local predominance'.[2] On the whole, the exchange was very satisfactory, and Curzon's policy was now definitely set aside. 'He [Benckendorff] was quite straightforward and satisfactory', wrote Lansdowne to Balfour, 'and George Hamilton has very properly told the other George that he must not send his little army to conquer Lhasa.'[3] Instead, Anglo-Tibetan negotiations were opened at Khambajong on the Tibetan frontier.

The same months also saw the burial of an ancient cause of discord between Britain and Russia. A change of policy at the Straits, forced by the refusal of Austria and Italy to join in the protest over the Russian torpedo-boats, came at last. A paper circulated by the Director of Naval Intelligence to the Committee of Imperial Defence in February argued that whether Russia had control of the Straits or whether she had not, she could not hope 'to effect anything serious, be it in Egypt or elsewhere, until her fleet has fought and beaten our fleet'. Without allies Britain could in any case do nothing against her until the French fleet had been disposed of. Austria and Italy would not co-operate, and 'Germany alone certainly would not run such risks for the mere purpose of frustrating Russia in her endeavour to improve her naval position in the Far East, where the former has no real interests; besides which, her position between Russia and France compels her to keep on good terms with the former at any price'.[4] The Committee accepted these conclusions, and on 14 February Balfour laid it down that

[1] Balfour to the King, 19 Feb. 1903. Royal Archives, W39. The King on the other hand reiterated his view that 'Russia cannot be trusted, as she has but one desire and that is to increase her power and territories in Asia' (Knollys to Balfour, 20 Feb. 1903. Ibid.).

[2] Lansdowne to Scott, 8 April 1903. F.O. Print (Central Asia), vol. 8263, No. 61.

[3] Lansdowne to Balfour, 12 April 1903. Balfour MSS, Add. MSS 49728.

[4] Memo by D.N.I., 7 Feb. 1903. C.I.D. Records, Cab. 2/1, Paper 2B.

if Russia won control of the Straits, 'while [she] would no doubt obtain certain naval advantages from the change it would not fundamentally alter the present strategic position in the Mediterranean . . . the maintenance of the "status quo" as regards Constantinople is not one of the primary naval or military interests of this country'.[1]

Lansdowne was also anxious to avoid a quarrel with Russia in another area of traditional Anglo-Russian rivalry—Macedonia. At the beginning of 1903 there was general fear in Europe that the spring would see a Macedonian uprising which would lead to war between Turkey and Bulgaria and so raise the whole Balkan question. Lansdowne was careful not to become involved and told Austria and Russia, who claimed to take the lead in Balkan affairs, that he recognised that they were 'specially interested in the matter and also that they were in a specially advantageous position for dealing with it'.[2] Overtures from Italy, who was jealous of the predominance of the two Powers, were ignored,[3] and Lansdowne made no attempt to assert British power in the region. This policy, though diplomatically necessary, was unpopular at home. Both public opinion[4] and Parliament[5] were thought to be particularly sensitive on the subject of Macedonia. The King too wanted a more active policy. He already thought that 'Lansdowne is afraid to do anything and is as lukewarm as Count Goluchowski'[6]; and he favoured acceptance of the proposal for an Anglo-Italian accord.[7] It is apparent that Edward VII, far from being the founder of the ententes, opposed in Afghanistan and Macedonia policies essential to their achievement. For the moment, however, Lansdowne could resist these internal pressures, and on 17 February he accepted the meagre plan of reforms worked out by Austria and Russia. He made only the qualification that he reserved the right to suggest changes if it proved inadequate.[8]

The events of the first three months of 1903 had all served to convince Lansdowne that an agreement with Russia was both

[1] Memo by P.M., 14 Feb. 1903. Ibid., Paper 1B.
[2] Lansdowne to Plunkett, 6 Jan. 1903. F.O. Print (S.E. Europe), vol. 8175, No. 18.
[3] Lansdowne to Rodd, 16 Jan. and 5 Feb., and Rodd to Lansdowne, 13 Jan. 1903. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xvi.
[4] Cranborne to Sanderson, 11 April 1903. Ibid., vol. xxxii.
[5] Lansdowne to O'Conor, 14 Aug. 1903. Ibid., vol. xxvii.
[6] Lee, *King Edward VII*, vol. ii, p. 258.
[7] Minute on Rodd to Lansdowne, 13 Jan. 1903. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xvi.
[8] Lansdowne to Scott, despatch No. 35, 17 Feb. 1903. F.O. 65/1658.

feasible and desirable. By 23 March he was 'extremely anxious to convince the Russian Government that we cannot deal with these occurrences as if they were isolated incidents. If we are to come to an understanding it should have reference to Tibet, Afghanistan, Seistan and Persia generally.'[1] To the Prime Minister on 12 April he wrote: 'I don't despair of finding a reasonable solution of the Russo-Afghan difficulty and perhaps of other tiresome questions which concern Russia and us.'[2] He repeated to Curzon on the 24th that he was 'in great hopes' of a settlement with Russia on questions connected with India.[3]

This was the background to the Baghdad Railway negotiations, which reached their climax in April 1903. The Germans had been steadily extending their interests in the Ottoman Empire for many years, and in 1899 had obtained from the Porte a provisional concession to extend the German-owned Anatolian Railway to Baghdad and Basra. The cost of such an extension would be extremely heavy, and they had at once approached the other Powers to participate. One such approach was made to Britain early in 1901, and Lansdowne had then argued that she should agree, not only because of the merits of the railway itself but also because 'we shall please Germany by meeting the project in a friendly spirit'. A more cautious note was struck by Salisbury: 'Only we must not allow the Kaiser to make us take the chestnuts out of the Russian fire. I think we shall get better terms by showing some coyness.'[4]

As the Germans continued to make soundings, it became apparent that French financiers were ready to join, but that Russia maintained an attitude of implacable opposition. In April 1902 Lansdowne was still anxious to join: the line would be 'a most important highway to the East' and it was essential that Britain should have some share in its control. All the other Powers except Russia were likely to join, 'and the fact that we should be able to look only to Russia for support or cooperation would increase the difficulty'.[5] Later that year, when the French and German groups seemed to be on the point of agreement, Lansdowne began a detailed study of the conditions upon which Britain could join.[6]

[1] Lansdowne to Scott, 23 March 1903. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xxiv.
[2] Lansdowne to Balfour, 12 April 1903. Balfour MSS, Add. MSS 49728.
[3] Lansdowne to Curzon, 24 April 1903. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xxix.
[4] Minutes by Lansdowne and Salisbury on memo by Sanderson, 4 Jan. 1901. F.O. 78/5249.
[5] B.D. II.205.
[6] Memo by Lansdowne, 9 June 1902. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xxix.

Britain's main concern with the railway was that it would have a terminus on the Persian Gulf, an area she regarded as particularly her own: in March 1902 Lansdowne had told Cambon that Britain would 'certainly oppose any attempt by other Powers to create strategical bases or fortified harbours in those waters'.[1] But he had to tread very carefully. Britain's own military position in Persia was very weak, while the Gulf was, as both Brodrick[2] and Hamilton[3] warned Curzon, an area where France, Germany, and Russia all had interests and where a combination of all three against Britain was possible. It was therefore impossible to put a complete prohibition on the designs of the other Powers in the Gulf. Britain must instead make calculated concessions and manipulate their rivalries. Hamilton at the end of 1901 advocated British support for the railway on the ground that 'it would bring her [Germany] into collision with Russia'.[4] Even in November 1902 Nicholson, the Director of Military Intelligence, and Altham, the head of the Imperial section of his Department, wanted a definite understanding with Germany on the Gulf. A conference, held on 19 November, with representatives from the Admiralty, War Office, Foreign Office, and India Office, agreed that

> the most effective check to Russian progress towards South Persia lay in the completion of the railway from Constantinople to Baghdad as it would bring the Turks in force on the flank of a Russian advance, and that it would be a great mistake to oppose the project, which we ought on the contrary to encourage to the best of our power.[5]

Brodrick, the War Secretary, disagreed with these conclusions but not with the approach adopted to the problem. He thought it 'very clear that it is not to Germany's interest that these two Powers [France and Russia] should monopolize the trade in that region, and in the event of hostilities we are exceedingly unlikely to stand alone'. An understanding with Germany would therefore provide no extra security, but it would encourage her ambitions and would raise the whole Persian Gulf question.[6]

[1] Lansdowne to Monson, 19 March 1902, official despatch No. 117. Ibid.
[2] Ronaldshay, *Lord Curzon*, vol. ii, p. 207.
[3] Hamilton to Curzon, 17 Oct. 1901. Hamilton MSS, Letters to Curzon, vol. iii.
[4] Hamilton to Curzon, 14 Nov. 1901. Ibid.
[5] Papers enclosed with letter from Government of India to Secretary of State, 4 Feb. 1904. C.I.D. Records, Cab. 6/1, Paper 38.
[6] Minute by Brodrick, 4 Nov. 1902. Ibid.

But if the line would check Russia it would also, if it could be internationalised, contain German aspirations. The starting point for discussion here was that Britain alone could not prevent the construction of the railway. 'A violation of our monopoly [in the Gulf] must sooner or later take place,' wrote Hamilton in March 1902, 'and I do not think it a wise policy to take up an irreconcilable attitude towards that which is inevitable.'[1] Lansdowne in April 1903 told the Cabinet that 'we are, I take it, not prepared to sterilise the Persian Gulf so far as the flow of commerce is concerned and I do not believe that we should be allowed to veto a commercial port at the terminus of the new line'.[2] If the line was to be built with or without Britain, it was obviously in her interest to join and share control with Germany. Hamilton told Curzon that Balfour, Lansdowne, and Ritchie pressed for British participation 'in order to convert a concession that would have otherwise been a purely German one and under German control into one under international management'.[3] Lansdowne too believed that 'we might have done a great stroke by getting rid of the existing Anatolian Railway as a German enterprise, and substituting for it an international line from sea to sea'. When his attempt failed, he lamented that 'the enterprise will acquire a more distinctly German complexion than ever'.[4]

The attractions were so great to Lansdowne that he even convinced himself that British participation in the railway could be combined with his policy of entente with Russia.[5] His Cabinet memorandum on the railway was circulated on 14 April; his letters to Scott, Balfour, and Curzon on his desire for a Russian settlement were written on 23 March, 12 April, and 24 April. He explained to Scott that, if the Baghdad Railway was built, Russia could build a railway from the Caspian to the Gulf, and that he would not object so long as Britain controlled the southern end.[6] To the Cabinet he spoke of a Russian branch line from Erivan, connecting with the international railway at Baghdad.[7]

[1] Hamilton to Curzon, 13 March 1902. Hamilton MSS, Letters to Curzon, vol. iv.
[2] B.D. II.216.
[3] Hamilton to Curzon, 15 May 1903. Hamilton MSS, Letters to Curzon, vol. v.
[4] Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 254.
[5] He wrote to Balfour on 12 April: 'I doubt whether they [the Russians] will be at all incensed by our participation in the Bagdad Railway.' Balfour MSS, Add. MSS 49728.
[6] Lansdowne to Scott, 23 March 1903. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xxiv.
[7] B.D. II.216.

Everything had been allowed for; in Lansdowne's own words, 'such an arrangement might have settled the Persian Gulf question for many years to come.'[1] It would satisfy Britain's leading rivals without any danger to her own interests; if Russia and Germany insisted on an outlet to the Gulf no more harmless way of giving it to them could be devised than a purely commercial outlet, under international control. They would be propitiated with the shadow; Britain could keep the substance. One sentence in Lansdowne's Cabinet memorandum gives the essence of his policy: '. . . an international free port, open to all, and unfortified, at Koweit would not be a source of danger to us, while its existence would be an answer to those who accuse us of desiring to treat the Persian Gulf as a British lake.'[2]

Curzon disliked the railway because 'it will rivet the German claims on that part of the Turkish dominions and will revolutionize the situation at Baghdad',[3] and Cranborne, although he agreed with Lansdowne on the principle, thought the detailed terms offered were inadequate.[4] But the real opposition came from those who abhorred the idea of co-operation with Germany at the expense of relations with Russia. It was not easy to share Lansdowne's optimistic assumption that the Russians would not be offended. Benckendorff told Sanderson on 11 April that 'it had occurred to him that as a commencement of a better understanding between the two countries it might be a good plan that they should endeavour to arrive at an agreement in regard to their policy towards Turkey'.[5] He made his meaning plainer still when he told Lansdowne on the 14th that Russia 'was apprehensive of German designs on Constantinople . . . [and] had never liked the scheme which [she] regarded as intended to give Germany a dangerous preponderance in Asia Minor'.[6] Lansdowne ignored these hints; having satisfied himself that the Russians would in the end accept the railway, he refused to give up the opportunity, otherwise so attractive, of sharing it with the Germans. He was not a dogmatic anti-German and was ready to examine each diplomatic question involving them on its own merits.

[1] Newton, op. cit., p. 254. [2] B.D. II.216.
[3] Curzon to Lansdowne, 8 May 1902. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xxix.
[4] Cranborne to Sandars and Balfour, 17 April 1903. Balfour MSS, Add. MSS 49757. To Bertie, 12 April and 22 May 1903, Bertie MSS, Series A.
[5] Lansdowne to Scott, despatch No. 86, 14 April 1903. F.O. 65/1658. [6] Ibid.

This was not true of the opposition to him. As soon as it became likely that Britain would join the railway a press campaign of remarkable intensity began against any co-operation with Germany. It was supported by Joseph Chamberlain inside the Cabinet. He had just arrived back from South Africa to find many decisions taken without his approval. Balfour, giving Devonshire a list of these in August, concluded with the remark: 'I do not trouble to mention minor difficulties such as those which arose in connection with the Anatolian Railway.' Chamberlain had argued his case with some acerbity; Balfour recalled that he was 'by no means an agreeable colleague during the first months after his return to England'.[1] 'But for Joe's bile', wrote Lansdowne, 'the opposition would not be serious'[2]; he asserted that Strachey and Maxse, the leaders of the anti-German campaign in the press, were aware of his sympathy for them.[3] The combination of a fierce public outcry and the opposition of the most powerful member of the Cabinet could not be resisted, and although Lansdowne was supported 'with great ardour' by Balfour,[4] his policy was defeated.

Lansdowne was shocked by this exhibition of Germanophobia, what he called this 'insensate outcry'.[5] 'We are still suffering', he told O'Conor, 'from an insensate hatred and suspicion of anything which can be described as of German origin and these feelings will not die out in a hurry—it is ridiculous and to my mind humiliating.'[6] Another member of the Cabinet who was alarmed by the violence of the press campaign was Selborne, who was by no means unusually friendly to Germany. He told Curzon that it had done 'a power of mischief'. 'It cannot in any way serve our interests to make the cleavage between England and Germany greater. Strachey and Maxse are doing worse still by preaching a throw-yourself-into-the-arms-of-Russia-at-any-price doctrine. It would be an immense advantage to us to have a real equable all round settlement with Russia, but why on earth should Russia want to settle?'[7] But, much as men like Lansdowne and Selborne deplored the excesses of anti-

[1] Balfour to Devonshire, 27 Aug. 1903. Devonshire MSS, 340.2943.
[2] Lansdowne to Balfour, 12 April 1903. Balfour MSS, Add. MSS 49728.
[3] Lansdowne to Balfour, 17 April 1903. Ibid.
[4] According to Sir Clinton Dawkins, the leading British financier involved. Dawkins to Curzon, 26 April 1903. Curzon MSS, volume of letters, 'England and Abroad, 1901–4'.
[5] B.D. II.224.
[6] Lansdowne to O'Conor, 6 May 1903. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xxvii.
[7] Selborne to Curzon, 24 April 1903. Curzon MSS, Box S, Part 2.

German opinion, they were also afraid of it and increasingly inhibited in their diplomacy by it. But Lansdowne continued to be borne along by events he could not control.

The immediate result was that Britain was drawn still more closely to Russia. The breakdown of the negotiations left a vacuum in Lansdowne's policy which he at once filled by his 'Persian Gulf Declaration' on 5 May. This was a statement in the House of Lords that 'we should regard the establishment of a naval base or of a fortified port in the Persian Gulf by any other Power as a very grave menace to British interests, and we should certainly resist it with all the means at our disposal'.[1] This was a warning to Germany as much as to Russia, and a statement to the Russians of the terms upon which Britain would make an entente with them. Lansdowne left no doubt about this when he told Benckendorff on the next day that they 'should consider whether it would not be possible to arrive at an understanding concerning the policy of the two countries in Persia'. Britain recognised Russia's predominance in the north and herself had special interests in the Gulf, the southern ports, and Seistan. Benckendorff reacted favourably. He said that, although the Persian Gulf Declaration was probably made with Russia in mind, 'he saw nothing in that statement to which exception could be taken', and on Lansdowne's wider Persian proposals, he 'would be glad to discuss them with me unofficially whenever I liked'.[2]

3

The problems facing the Cabinet at the beginning of 1903 were in Central Asia, Morocco, and the Persian Gulf; but all this time the most serious of all, the Far Eastern, had been quiescent. Now, at the end of April, it suddenly flared into life again, more urgent, more dangerous, than all the others. The Russians had agreed in the convention of 8 April 1902 to evacuate their troops from Manchuria in three stages of six months each. The first withdrawal had taken place as planned by October 1902; but 8 April 1903, the date set for the completion of the second stage, came and went without any further Russian movement. Then, on the 23rd, the chargé d'affaires at Peking reported that Russia was demanding

[1] B.D. IV, p. 371.
[2] Lansdowne to Scott, despatch No. 116, 6 May 1903. F.O. 65/1658.

the fulfilment of seven conditions before evacuation was completed.[1]

The crisis was so acute for Britain not only because of the difficulty and importance of the Far Eastern question itself but also because she was now tied to Japan. The Japanese, who had been so moderate in the spring of 1902, were now truculent. Komura, the Foreign Minister, forecast on the 27th that Russian occupation of Manchuria would, in due course, mean an occupation of Korea also. This would 'threaten the very existence of Japan' and 'it behoved [her] to consider whether the time had not come to speak'. 'The tone of his remarks', commented MacDonald, 'was very serious.'[2] Next day the Japanese Minister of Marine asked Britain to reinforce her squadron in the Far East.[3]

The chickens were coming home to roost. This situation had been predicted by critics of the Japanese Alliance, and their arguments had never really been met by Lansdowne. In their alarm the Cabinet clutched at the possibility of American support. Their hopes were based on a report by Scott that the American Ambassador in St Petersburg had denounced the alleged conditions in unusually strong language as 'diametrically opposed to the interests, intentions and rights of the United States'.[4] Probably at Chamberlain's insistence, the Cabinet then decided that it could not face war with Russia with Japan alone as an ally, and determined upon an appeal to the Americans. On the 28th a private letter went to Herbert.

> The Cabinet while objecting most strongly to the action of Russia would certainly hesitate and probably refuse to go to war either alone or with Japan only as an ally to prevent the absorption of Manchuria and Mongolia. But if the separate remonstrances of the United States and Great Britain and Japan should prove insufficient and if then the United States government should decide to press their claims even to the extremity of hostile actions H.M.G. would take similar actions, although no previous arrangement or alliance had been made with the United States government.
>
> You will therefore see that in the last resort the United States govern-

[1] B.D. II.226.
[2] Ibid. This account was at once telegraphed to London. Telegram No. 19, F.O. 46/568.
[3] MacDonald to Lansdowne, telegram No. 21, 28 April 1903. F.O. 46/568.
[4] Scott to Lansdowne, telegram No. 25, 27 April 1903, F.O. 65/1663.

ment can count on the assistance of Great Britain although H.M.G. would not take the initiative in such a case.

I send you this confidential information as to inner mind of Cabinet—It must of course not be quoted officially.[1]

Meanwhile Scott was told that 'you are authorized to use language similar to that employed by your United States colleague but you should be careful not to say more than he has done'.[2] Even these instructions were cancelled the next day,[3] after an amicable interview between Lansdowne and Benckendorff. Benckendorff stated that he did not believe the alleged condition to which Britain took most exception was in the draft convention, but promised to make definite inquiries. Lansdowne in reply expressed the hope that he would be as much help in dissipating British apprehensions over Manchuria as with those over Tibet.[4] Hamilton told Curzon that the two men had established 'very friendly relations'.[5]

While Benckendorff was making inquiries, the shortlived hope of American intervention was destroyed. The American Ambassador to St Petersburg, whose language had been misreported by Scott, expressed himself on the 29th as satisfied with Lamsdorff's denial that Russia was insisting upon the conditions which had been alleged.[6] Then, on 1 May, Herbert told Lansdowne that, although the United States would try to keep Russia to her promises and protect American commerce, she would not go to war over Manchuria.[7]

The American attitude deterred Britain from support of Japan; so too did the fact that Russian communications continued to be conciliatory and reassuring. On 2 May Benckendorff told Lansdowne that Russia had no intention of obstructing foreign commerce in Manchuria[8]; on the 6th he and Lansdowne agreed to dis-

[1] Lansdowne to Herbert, 28 April 1903. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xxviii. The draft in the Lansdowne Papers is almost entirely in Chamberlain's handwriting. Balfour substituted 'would certainly hesitate and probably refuse' in the first paragraph for Chamberlain's blunt 'are not prepared'; and Lansdowne added the last paragraph. The rest is by Chamberlain—and the whole letter is typical of his diplomacy.
[2] Lansdowne to Scott, telegram No. 43, 28 April 1903. F.O. 65/1663.
[3] Lansdowne to Scott, telegram No. 45, 29 April 1903. Ibid.
[4] Lansdowne to Scott, despatch No. 99. 29 April 1903. F.O. 65/1658.
[5] Hamilton to Curzon, 30 April 1903. Hamilton MSS, Letters to Curzon, vol. v.
[6] Scott to Lansdowne, telegram No. 26. 29 April 1903. F.O. 65/1663.
[7] Herbert to Lansdowne, 1 May 1903. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xxviii.
[8] B.D. II.229.

cuss Persia[1]; and on the 14th Lamsdorff told Scott that he attached 'great value' to these negotiations for a Central Asian entente.[2] At the same interview he repeated all Benckendorff's assurances about Manchuria.[3] Scott believed that the contrast between Russia's provocative actions and Lamsdorff's pacific assurances was caused by the activities of the party inside Russia that opposed him,[4] and the British soon deduced the need to sustain the peaceful and friendly Lamsdorff against his extreme rivals by following a restrained policy themselves.

The British had, moreover, little faith in the fighting efficiency of the Japanese. Selborne had hoped when the Alliance was made that Japan would relieve Britain of much of the burden of maintaining a strong force in Far Eastern waters. But this hope had not been entirely borne out. Japan made no plans for further naval construction while Russia expanded her fleet rapidly. In October 1902 after complaints from Selborne,[5] the Japanese published a large building programme[6]; but none of the new ships was ready by May 1903 or indeed by the outbreak of war in 1904, and Japan entered that war with only six battleships, the number she had possessed at the time of the Alliance. Meanwhile, Russia, with much greater resources, was building up her squadron in the Far East with great speed: by August she already had six first-class battleships there and was building three more to join them.[7] There was also doubt about the efficiency of the Japanese Army. Colonel Churchill, the former Military Attaché at Tokyo, reported on 27 May that Japan would be defeated if she fought Russia alone and that her Army was generally inferior to the Russian.[8] No more favourable estimate survives.

A letter from Cranborne to Bertie at the end of June well expresses the apprehension of the Foreign Office as it watched the development of the Far Eastern crisis. 'Any day we might have a diplomatic demand by Japan for the specific performance of the Manchurian Convention—perhaps not any day but sooner or later

[1] See p. 123.
[2] Scott to Lansdowne, despatch No. 136, 14 May 1903. F.O. 65/1660.
[3] B.D. II.231.
[4] Scott to Lansdowne, despatch No. 126, 4 May 1903. F.O. 65/1660.
[5] Lansdowne to MacDonald, despatch No. 58, 15 May 1902. F.O. 46/550.
[6] MacDonald to Lansdowne, telegram No. 67, 30 Oct. 1902. F.O. 46/554.
[7] Scott to Lansdowne, despatch No. 243, 20 Aug. 1903. F.O. 65/1661.
[8] Enclosure in W.O. to F.O., 1 July 1903. F.O. 46/575.

—And then! What then!'[1] The evil day came a step nearer on 3 July. Hayashi announced that Japan could no longer pursue a policy of forbearance and would approach Russia for a direct settlement of the differences between the two countries in Manchuria and Korea. If that approach failed, 'whatever consequences might ensue' would lie solely upon Russia. Meanwhile, he invited Britain, under the terms of the Alliance, to a discussion on the common interests placed in jeopardy by Russia and added that 'the Imperial Government would be glad to know what steps the British Government proposed to take in defence of their threatened interests'. Lansdowne postponed a reply until he could consult his colleagues, and merely observed that it was important to act as far as possible with the United States.[2] The great crisis seemed at last to be imminent. Britain was in an unenviable position: liable to go to war with an apparently weak ally, for interests which were not of the first importance to her, and with two European Great Powers, France and Russia, with whom she already desired to reach an agreement. There was only one way out: a close entente with France. And it so happened that in the very week that Hayashi made his statement President Loubet, accompanied by Delcassé, was on a state visit to London.

Relations between Britain and France had been steadily improving. In Siam, the French Chamber had rejected the Franco-Siamese Treaty, but Lansdowne had resisted the temptation to score points off France and had admitted that he was making arrangements in the Malay States.[3] In Morocco, he had refused a request from Maclean in early June for an exclusively British loan to pay off the Anglo-Franco-Spanish loan contracted in the spring.[4] But perhaps the most important change in the relationship of the two countries was a change of atmosphere, the growth of a general feeling of cordiality between them. A straw in the wind was the movement for a general treaty of arbitration; the diplomats, though suspicious, adopted the idea because they recognised its value as a sign of friendship.[5] The same period also saw King Edward's famous visit to Paris. Although it had no diplomatic importance, it did help to create this atmosphere of good will, and as soon as it

[1] Cranborne to Bertie, 26 June 1903. Bertie MSS, Series A.
[2] B.D. II.237. [3] B.D. II.340.
[4] Letter from Forwood's, and minute by Lansdowne, 3 June 1903. F.O. 99/431.
[5] B.D. II.352–4.

was over arrangements were made for a return visit by Loubet—possibly against the King's wishes.[1]

The two countries were not, however, negotiating an entente; rather they stood on the brink of negotiations. Lansdowne had not taken up the hint, made by Cambon in February, about a discussion of the 'liquidation' of Morocco. Egypt had not been mentioned. Indeed, the first reference to the possibility of combining the two questions came in a private letter from Cromer to Lansdowne on 29 May. 'We must', he wrote, 'make a serious effort to get rid of the Caisse de la Dette', and he suggested that it might be done by means of a 'transaction' over Morocco.[2] Lansdowne in reply acknowledged that 'it would be an immense thing if we could get rid of the "caisse" ' and hinted at the possibility of a division of Morocco with France and Spain. France, he noted, was ready to recognise Spanish interests if 'other Powers'—by which he meant Germany—were excluded.[3] This was the French condition, and if Lansdowne wanted an understanding at all he must accept it.

Anglo-French relations were still in this uncertain state when Loubet and Delcassé arrived at the beginning of July. Lansdowne had not even made arrangements for a private meeting with Delcassé, and it was only at Cambon's request, and at the last moment, that such a meeting was agreed to.[4] What finally brought Lansdowne, after so much hesitation, to broach the subject of an entente was the serious news from the Far East. According to Hamilton, Delcassé held out the inducement that, if an entente could be

[1] On 8 May, just after the King's return, Monson wrote that there might be constitutional difficulties in the way of a visit by the President that year; and on 9 May Lansdowne replied that the King understood these difficulties and would 'be content that they should prevail'. Monson then wrote, on the 15th, that although he would not encourage the idea of a return visit, he could not afford to give the impression that it was not wanted. This drew, on the 19th, a reply from Lansdowne stating that 'the King has for reasons with which I need not trouble you found it necessary to reconsider the question'; and that that summer was now considered the best time for a return visit. Lansdowne MSS, vols. ix, x.

[2] Cromer to Lansdowne, 29 May 1903. Lansdowne MSS, vol. viii.

[3] Lansdowne to Cromer, 8 June 1903. Ibid. Lansdowne's precise wording seems to contain a hint but only a hint. 'It is true that we have "gone Spanish" in so far as we have discouraged partition and assured the Spanish government of our desire to avoid it. The Spanish Government are more touchy upon this subject than almost any other, and the discovery that we were lending ourselves to a backstairs arrangement with France would be a tremendous shock to their feelings. So far as I can make out the French government do not dislike the idea of recognizing Spanish interests in Morocco on the understanding that that country is to be the object of solicitude on the part of France, Spain and Britain, and that other Powers are to keep their hands off it.'

[4] Cambon, *Correspondance*, vol. ii, p. 95.

effected, 'he will exercise a restraining influence upon Russia, if not in fact intimate to Russia that, under certain conditions, she could not rely upon French support if she picked a quarrel with us'.[1] On the 3rd Lansdowne received Hayashi's communication; on the 7th he told Delcassé of his opinion that 'the points at issue between the two Governments were few in number, and by no means incapable of adjustment'. The subsequent conversation ran smoothly. Delcassé claimed, and Lansdowne did not deny, the sole right of France to 'regenerate' Morocco, and Delcassé 'unhesitatingly' accepted Lansdowne's three conditions: neutralisation of the Mediterranean seaboard; adequate recognition of Spanish interests; and the protection of British commerce. Delcassé then assured Lansdowne that the question of Egypt could be settled 'if only we could come to an agreement as to the position of France and Morocco'. The minor questions could be disposed of in the same way.[2] On the next day Balfour told Delcassé that he supported Lansdowne,[3] and the Cabinet, when consulted, were, according to Balfour's report to the King, 'unanimous in their wish to proceed with the negotiations'.[4] Lansdowne now proceeded to the discussion of details, in conversations with Cambon on 29 July and 5 August.[5]

During July and August, in order to prepare a statement of British demands, he invited the opinions of the other government authorities concerned. From Cromer he received powerful and unqualified support: he acknowledged with characteristic directness: 'Morocco will, to all intents and purposes, become before long a French province', but argued that the collapse of Morocco was in any case inevitable, and that Britain could get counter-concessions in Egypt for recognising what she could not prevent. This letter, with the exception of a passage stating that there should be no difficulty in meeting French views in Siam, received the approval of Edward VII.[6] On 7 August Cromer also made detailed proposals aimed at freeing Britain's hands in Egypt, which were adopted almost word for word by Lansdowne in his letter to Cambon on 1 October.[7] The Colonial Office, Chamberlain's department, was also officially consulted on those subjects which concerned it directly. Of these only Siam was important, but the Colonial Office

[1] Hamilton to Curzon, 9 July 1903. Hamilton MSS, Letters to Curzon, vol. v.
[2] B.D. II.357. [3] D.D.F. III.362.
[4] Goudswaard, *The End of Britain's 'Splendid Isolation'*, p. 112.
[5] B.D. II.363–4. [6] B.D. II.359. [7] B.D. II.365.

gave full support to an agreement with the French there. It was 'of paramount importance' to Britain to control the Kra Isthmus, and the Colonial Office even admitted that the sphere to be given to Britain was more valuable than that for France. Finally, they revived the idea of excluding other Powers, of 'letting the world know that Great Britain and France guarantee the centre of Siam and outside the guaranteed centre exercise Protectorates on either side'.[1]

But the entente met with vigorous opposition from the service departments. Both concentrated their criticism upon one defect. A War Office memorandum of 31 July rejected Lansdowne's plan to avoid the danger of French control of the seaboard by neutralising it and giving it to Spain. There was no assurance that Spain would, or could, prevent France from occupying this stretch of coast, especially as France would no doubt build railways up to her new frontier. In fact, 'no reliable arrangement can be made for preventing France from eventually establishing herself throughout the whole of Morocco, not excepting that portion of the coast-line from which we are especially desirous of excluding her, if we consent to her having that political predominance in the country which she wishes us to concede'. The War Office concluded that 'as the concession which France asks for in Morocco will be to our disadvantage and may carry with it serious consequences, it should not be granted unless we receive a very substantial "quid pro quo" in other parts of the world'.[2] A further memorandum by Nicholson in November took this argument even further. Britain could not ensure the exclusion of France from the coast; she would lose her political influence; and her trade would be threatened. French concessions in Egypt were no compensation: occupation of Egypt was, because of the need to protect it in war, 'a source of weakness', and the French were offering no more than a 'vague pledge'. These political advantages were 'quite insufficient' to balance the 'serious strategical disadvantages'. Nicholson was convinced that 'France would . . . gain a great deal and give up very little'.[3]

On 7 August Prince Louis of Battenberg, the Director of Naval Intelligence, also condemned Lansdowne's Moroccan proposals.

[1] Memo by C.O., 19 Aug. 1903. F.O. 27/3765.
[2] Memo by W.O., 31 July 1903. Lansdowne MSS, vol. x.
[3] Memo by D.M.I., 23 Nov. 1903. F.O. 27/3665.

Like his counterpart in the Army, he considered the failure to protect Britain's interests on the Moroccan coast as their gravest defect. Lansdowne had insisted on as two conditions the neutralisation of a part of the coast, including Tangiers, and the extension along the coast of the Spanish sphere of influence. Both devices Battenberg dismissed as inadequate. France had recently been working towards a 'Latin League' with Spain and Italy, and 'no more formidable coalition could be brought against us in the Mediterranean'. If she achieved this aim, she would have effectively destroyed both safeguards: Britain would be the only remaining guarantor of the neutrality of Tangiers, and the guarantee would only have force if she was prepared to make its infraction a *casus belli*; and the Spanish strip would be under French control. Battenberg concluded with a condemnation even more sweeping than that delivered by the Army: 'An arrangement which would leave the future fate of Morocco in the hands of France and Spain alone is not one which this country could contemplate with indifference, nor could the removal of subjects of dispute between France and England in other parts of the world, as is held out by M. Delcassé, be considered as compensation.'[1]

While the French entente was being discussed, the situation in the Far East was steadily deteriorating. American help once again proved to be unattainable. The Japanese declared that they could 'see no advantage' in taking the Americans into their confidence, as Lansdowne wished.[2] For a time Lansdowne, encouraged by a prophecy from Herbert that the Americans might 'become educated up to a more vigorous policy . . . in the next two or three years',[3] pursued the mirage. On 17 July he told the American Ambassador that the two countries should, as far as possible, work along the same lines and consult each other freely.[4] But the United States showed less disposition to intervene than ever and on 8 October signed with the Chinese a commercial treaty which ensured her interests throughout the Empire.[5] On the same day Hay told the Japanese that they could not expect American help in war.[6]

Lansdowne had therefore to find an alternative policy. The ob-

[1] Memo by D.N.I., 7 Aug. 1903. Lansdowne MSS, vol. x. [2] B.D. II.238.
[3] Herbert to Lansdowne, 8 May 1903. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xxviii.
[4] Lansdowne to Raikes, despatch No. 145, 17 July 1903. F.O. 5/2521.
[5] Raikes to Lansdowne, despatch No. 287, 8 Oct. 1903. F.O. 5/2524.
[6] Raikes to Lansdowne, telegram No. 202, 8 Oct. 1903. F.O. 5/2525.

vious recourse, since Russia could not be resisted in the Far East, was to compromise with her and extend the projected Central Asian entente to cover Manchuria. On 29 July, therefore, Lansdowne told Benckendorff that 'we had . . . always recognised that Russia had special interests in that part of China which adjoined her possessions, and we should be ready to consider in the most friendly spirit an arrangement based, on the one hand, upon the recognition of those interests by this country, and, on the other, upon the recognition by Russia of the analogous interests of Great Britain in other parts of the Chinese Empire'.[1] Benckendorff's language was, as ever, cordial, and he spoke of the scheme with implied approval.[2]

This was satisfactory, as far as it went; but Lansdowne had always known that Lamsdorff and Benckendorff were opposed by a powerful and belligerent party inside Russia. The course of the conflict between the two groups was watched with apprehensive interest. Then, on 13 August, the Czar suddenly created a special Viceroyalty of the Far East and entrusted it to Admiral Alexeiev, a leader of the expansionist party; all business relating to Manchuria would now have to go through him. Only a fortnight later Witte, Lamsdorff's most powerful ally, resigned from the Ministry of Finance. Scott was now very anxious: 'I regard situation now as very serious inasmuch as it seems to denote final triumph of eastern expansion influence in Emperor's councils, and I fear that we must be prepared for dangerous developments.'[3] Even before Alexeiev's appointment MacDonald had believed that it would be difficult to avoid war,[4] and Scott had reported the arrival of heavy Russian reinforcements in the Far East.[5]

These events convinced Lansdowne that the government's service advisers must be overruled and the strategic risk of concessions in Morocco accepted. On 10 September he circulated a memorandum pressing the entente upon his colleagues.

> An all-round settlement with France upon the lines now suggested would, I believe, be enormously to our advantage. It would be worth while to sacrifice something in order to minimize the chances of future

[1] B.D. II.242. Chamberlain and Delcassé had already discussed such a project during the latter's visit to London. Ibid.
[2] B.D. II.243.
[3] Scott to Lansdowne, telegram No. 62, 14 Aug. 1903. F.O. 65/1663.
[4] MacDonald to Lansdowne, telegram No. 66, 11 Aug. 1903. F.O. 46/568.
[5] Scott to Lansdowne, telegrams Nos. 55 and 56, 31 July and 1 August 1903. F.O. 65/1663.

trouble with that country and if the settlement now in contemplation were to have this result, and were to enable us to 'clinch' the friendly feelings towards us which are at this moment prevalent upon the other side of the Channel we should, I believe, be amply recompensed for such a sacrifice if it were of moderate dimensions. A good understanding with France would not improbably be the precursor of a better understanding with Russia, and I need not insist upon the improvement which would result in our international position, which, in view of our present relations with Germany as well as Russia, I cannot regard with satisfaction.[1]

Lansdowne regarded the international situation as dangerous, so dangerous that it would have made a 'sacrifice of moderate dimensions' worth while to gain the friendship of France. It was these general considerations which finally converted the Admiralty, though not the War Office. At a meeting of the Committee of Imperial Defence on 14 December, the military representatives maintained their view that 'the effect of the proposed Agreement might be to weaken seriously our strategical position in the Mediterranean and that no corresponding strategical advantages would accrue to this country in Egypt'. But the naval members present, Kerr, the First Sea Lord, and Battenberg, 'did not consider that those criticisms, which were mainly of a kind affecting naval rather than military interests, were of sufficient importance to outweigh the advantages which this country would derive from the adoption of the Agreement as a whole'.[2]

But Lansdowne also argued that the agreement was well worth making for its own sake, and in particular he took especial care to justify the concessions to France in Morocco. His starting-point here was a letter from Nicolson, written on 26 July.

> There is no doubt that the French are gaining ground at Fez and generally in the country; and if bargains are to be made it would perhaps be prudent to arrange them before the French have entirely occupied the field. Later on the latter might consider that our position at the Court was crumbling away, and that our goodwill, so far as Morocco was concerned, was not so valuable as it is at the moment.[3]

Lansdowne quoted this letter in his Cabinet memorandum and concluded from it that Britain was 'powerless to check' French

[1] Memo by Lansdowne, 10 Sept. 1903. F.O. 27/3765.
[2] Minutes of 28th meeting of C.I.D., 14 Dec. 1903. Cab. 2/1.
[3] Nicolson to Sanderson, 26 July 1903. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xix.

penetration into Morocco. The larger political situation was also in France's favour. There was 'at this moment no reason why she should not form alliances with other Mediterranean Powers and greatly strengthen her hold upon the Moorish littoral', and he quoted Battenberg's opinion that if France, Italy, and Spain combined, 'no more formidable coalition could be brought against us in the Mediterranean'.[1] Lansdowne's proposal should, however, guard against these dangers. 'If the understanding which I desire to bring about is arrived at, she will, on the contrary, be bound to us by strong obligations which she may be expected to respect.' Lansdowne concluded from this survey that surrender in Morocco was 'a surrender to the inevitable', while British gains in other parts of the world were so great that 'I shall be surprised if the French Government does not tell us that the bargain is a one-sided one and ask to have the terms amended in their favour'.[2]

Germany was hardly mentioned. Lansdowne's only reference to her had been that to say that the present international situation was unsatisfactory 'in view of our present relations with Germany as well as Russia'. Anglo-German antipathy increased the uneasiness at the back of Lansdowne's mind; but it was really only important to him because it complicated the problem of dealing with Russia. The Cabinet's attention during 1903 was fixed upon Russia, and Germany was hardly ever mentioned in their correspondence; there was certainly no fear of Germany comparable to the fear of Russia which Balfour, Hamilton, and Selborne so frequently expounded. It was recognised, as Balfour told the King, that Germany, 'when she hears that Morocco is the subject of negotiations, will doubtless do her best to make things difficult for us all'[3]; but this was part of the price to be paid for French friendship. Little notice was taken of this inconvenient fact, and later in the negotiations it required all Cromer's efforts to have some protection against German obstruction in Egypt inserted into the entente.[4] It remains true that if Anglo-German relations had been

[1] This danger was of course by no means remote. Italy had been bought off as early as 1900, and Durand (Ambassador in Madrid) warned Lansdowne on 22 July that the French Ambassador was working for a Franco-Spanish alliance and that he might succeed if the opposition returned to power. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xxvi.

[2] Memo by Lansdowne, 10 Sept. 1903 F.O. 27/3765. This memorandum was approved by the King with two small alterations.

[3] Goudswaard, *The End of Britain's 'Splendid Isolation'*, p. 112.

[4] See pp. 144–5, 158–9.

cordial the entente might not have been necessary; but this was only because the uncertainty about the German attitude increased the already great anxiety about a conflict with Russia.

The conclusion is inescapable that, as Mallet said,[1] the Cabinet as a whole did not realise the significance of the French entente. Intent as they were upon reinsurance against the immediate prospect of war with Russia, it was a natural temptation for them to overlook the remoter danger of still worse relations with Germany. Lansdowne always regarded exhibitions of Germanophobia—over Venezuela and the Baghdad Railway—with distaste, but, with a Far Eastern war approaching, immediate necessities were too strong for him. A few did recognise the importance of the entente. Cromer frequently impressed it upon Lansdowne. Perhaps also Chamberlain was one; and Rosebery certainly was, although he drew conclusions opposite to Chamberlain's.[2] Another was Cranborne, who wrote to Bertie in April 1903: 'It looks from several symptoms as if we could have a very close understanding with France by holding up our finger, but that would hardly suit even such a Germanophobe as yourself, or at any rate me. I prefer the middle position, the "tertius gaudens".'[3] Brodrick also disliked the entente. He wrote to Curzon in January 1904:

> We are not yet at an agreement with France and I doubt whether any agreement will be regarded as very satisfactory in this country which would be accepted by Delcassé. In one respect the conclusion of an agreement would be unfortunate, as it will add to the suspicion of and distrust for Germany and embitter the feeling between the two countries.[4]

Lansdowne's memorandum was circulated on 10 September; but before it could be properly considered the Cabinet broke up. The growing disagreement about tariff reform came at last to a head, and on the 18th Chamberlain resigned, followed by the free traders, Ritchie and Hamilton and, in October, Devonshire. In the reconstruction Austen Chamberlain became Chancellor of the Exchequer and Brodrick moved to the India Office. These changes had no immediate effect upon the French and Russian negotiations, which were dictated by the needs of the moment and became more,

[1] See p. 164.
[2] Crewe, *Lord Rosebery*, vol. ii, p. 581.
[3] Cranborne to Bertie, 12 April 1903. Bertie MSS, Series A.
[4] Brodrick to Curzon, 22 Jan. 1904. Curzon MSS, Letters from Secretary of State, Jan.–Mar. 1904.

not less, necessary in the following months. They did, however, have a subtle long-term effect. The departure of the anti-German Joseph Chamberlain left foreign affairs almost exclusively to Balfour and Lansdowne, who took a much calmer view of relations with Germany and tended to be preoccupied with Russia. Austen Chamberlain at the Exchequer inherited his father's anti-German views but not his political authority, and, although Arnold-Forster, the new War Secretary, proved to be hostile to Germany, he had little influence. They were balanced by Salisbury (the title inherited by Cranborne in August on the death of his father, the old Prime Minister), who entered the Cabinet as Lord Privy Seal, and by Brodrick, who was moved to a department directly connected with foreign affairs.

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Lansdowne's memorandum was approved by the Cabinet, and on 1 October he sent Cambon the first definite statement of the terms upon which Britain would conclude an entente. He repeated that he was ready to recognise French predominance in Morocco if his three conditions—protection of British trade, neutralisation of the seaboard, and respect for Spanish interests—were accepted. His Egyptian proposals, closely following the suggestions made by Cromer, stipulated for French recognition of the permanence of the occupation, acquiescence in the abolition of the Caisse, and an admission that the Capitulations too must eventually be abolished.[1] Cambon on the 7th could give no definite answer, but he did throw out the suggestion that the British advance in Egypt should proceed *pari passu* with the French in Morocco.[2]

While Lansdowne waited for Delcassé's reply (which did not arrive until the 27th) he was bombarded by letters from Cromer, who was, wrote Sanderson, 'very excited' by the French negotiations.[3] Cromer urged concessions in everything that did not concern Egypt directly, hinting that Lansdowne should satisfy the French desire to have the Gambia and that in Morocco Spain should have only the minimum that was strategically necessary.[4] Where Egypt itself was concerned he insisted on the highest terms

[1] B.D. II.369. [2] B.D. II.370.
[3] Sanderson to Lansdowne, 9 Oct. 1903. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xxxi.
[4] Cromer to Lansdowne, 8 Oct. and 22 Oct. 1903. Ibid., vol. viii.

and pressed Lansdowne to reject Cambon's proposal of *pari passu* advances in Egypt and Morocco.[1] But his real significance at this time lay in his recognition of the larger possibilities of the entente. A letter to Balfour on the 15th dilated upon this. 'I cannot help regarding an understanding upon all pending questions with France as possibly a stepping-stone to a general understanding with Russia and that this, possibly, again may prepare the ground for some reduction in our enormous military and naval expenditure.'[2]

Lansdowne too hoped that a French agreement would be a 'stepping-stone' towards a Russian agreement. The need for both was kept firmly before his eyes by the events of that autumn. In the Balkans the timid reforms sponsored by Russia and Austria had altogether failed to achieve their object, and in April a widespread revolt broke out in Macedonia. War between Turkey and Bulgaria was only just avoided—'the situation', said Lamsdorff in May, 'hung at present on a single hair'.[3] The summer brought no improvement, and on 28 August O'Conor warned Lansdowne that unless more extensive reforms were carried through the existing political order in the Near East might collapse completely. O'Conor's solution was an autonomous Macedonia under international control; he suggested, not that Britain should take the lead in proposing it but that she should privately urge Russia and Austria to do so.[4] He gathered from Constans, his French colleague, that French support could be expected.[5]

Lansdowne would still not act alone. 'We are powerless', he told O'Conor frankly, 'unless we can move the other Powers and in attempting to do this we must be careful not to overshoot the mark.'[6] If Britain took isolated action, 'the results would not be convenient'.[7] He was however under strong pressure from the King, who spoke to Sanderson on 9 October about sending a squadron to Near Eastern waters,[8] and O'Conor's warning about the gravity of the crisis was confirmed when on 15 September

[1] Cromer to Lansdowne, 22 Oct. 1903. Ibid.
[2] Enclosure in Cromer to Lansdowne, 15 Oct. 1903. Zetland, *Lord Cromer*, p. 274.
[3] Scott to Lansdowne, 13 May 1903. F.O. Print (S.E. Europe), vol. 8261, No. 250.
[4] B.D. V, pp. 59–61.
[5] O'Conor to Lansdowne, 28 Aug. 1903. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xvii.
[6] Lansdowne to O'Conor, 24 Sept. 1903. Ibid.
[7] Lansdowne to O'Conor, 18 Oct. 1903. Ibid.
[8] Sanderson to Lansdowne, 9 Oct. 1903. Ibid., vol. xxxi.

Bulgaria mobilised 30,000 men. O'Conor's proposal offered a middle way through these difficulties—pressing Russia and Austria to go further, but leaving the public initiative to them. On 30 September, therefore, Lansdowne urged upon Goluchowski and Lamsdorff, who were then meeting to discuss the situation, a series of proposals aiming at an autonomous or internationally-controlled Macedonia.[1]

But there was no assurance that they would accept Lansdowne's suggestion or that, if accepted, it would avert a crisis, and some form of reinsurance was therefore necessary. The obvious step to take was to draw closer to France. 'I am anxious to keep the French in line with us if we can', wrote Lansdowne to O'Conor on 24 September.[2] Encouraged by news from Cambon's subordinate, Geoffray, that Cambon personally supported autonomy for Macedonia,[3] Lansdowne determined upon an official approach. A memorandum of 6 October explained his reasons. If war between Turkey and Bulgaria broke out, and the Bulgarians expelled the Turks from Macedonia, British public opinion would not allow the government to acquiesce in the restoration of the Sultan's rule. Austria and Russia had however warned Bulgaria that they would not allow her to profit from a victory. There remained Italy and France; the Italian Ambassador had already promised support for the emancipation of Macedonia, and, according to Lansdowne, 'the French Government too will have public opinion to reckon with'.[4] The response was as satisfactory as could have been expected. On 21 October Cambon told Lansdowne that although Delcassé could not officially support proposals going further than Russia's, 'il pourrait causer avec les Russes'.[5] This was excellent news for Lansdowne.

At the same time the situation in Asia was growing worse with every week that passed. Even the Central Asian negotiations, which had seemed so hopeful earlier in the year, received a setback. All attempts to persuade the Russians to define their Afghan demands had failed, and on 6 October the Russian government

[1] Lansdowne to Plunkett, 30 Sept. 1903. F.O. Print (S.E. Europe), vol. 8274, No. 508.

[2] Lansdowne to O'Conor, 24 Sept. 1903. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xxvii.

[3] Lansdowne to Monson, 16 Sept. 1903. F.O. Print (S.E. Europe), vol. 8274, No. 403.

[4] Memo by Lansdowne, 6 Oct. 1903. Balfour MSS, Add. MSS 49728.

[5] Lansdowne to Monson, 21 Oct. 1903. F.O. Print (S.E. Europe), vol. 8276, No. 112.

delivered a memorandum declaring, in peremptory language, that it would follow the policy already laid down and that the question was definitely closed.[1] 'Russia has notified her intention of sending, when she pleases, her Agents into Afghanistan', commented Spring-Rice.[2] Sanderson described this note as 'very uncompromising',[3] and doubted whether the Russians were ready to deal fairly with the British.[4]

But of course it was in the Far East that the situation was most urgent, and here the steady drift of Russia and Japan towards war continued. Russian proposals to Japan were described by Komura on 7 October as in 'entire opposition' to Japanese interests,[5] and on the 23rd Lansdowne, while still believing that the dispute 'should be capable of satisfactory settlement', admitted that there were 'disquieting symptoms'.[6] Cambon indeed said a little later that Lansdowne was 'dans un état d'émotion indescriptible' at the thought of war, that it 'le mettait hors de lui'.[7] It was these fears that drove him, on 26 October, to make an appeal to Cambon for French good offices to improve Anglo-Russian relations. The Russians, he complained, refused to treat him with confidence and left him to rely on possibly untrustworthy reports for his knowledge of events in Manchuria. Cambon promised to repeat Lansdowne's remarks to Delcassé.[8]

The result justified Lansdowne's hopes of the French entente. Delcassé approached Lamsdorff, who was then in Paris, and drew from him the admission that Russia should treat Britain with more frankness. He promised to give Benckendorff instructions which would meet Lansdowne's complaints. Cambon reported this exchange to Lansdowne on 4 November, and in gratitude Lansdowne asked him 'avec une effusion qui lui est peu habituelle, de vous [Delcassé] remercier de ce "service d'ami" '.[9]

This was not the only device used by Lansdowne to bring about an agreement with Russia. He had always been impressed by Russian strength, but, unlike Balfour, he had never been overawed

[1] B.D. IV, pp. 519, 621.
[2] B.D. IV, p. 519.
[3] Sanderson to Spring-Rice, 7 Oct. 1903. Spring-Rice MSS, vol. i.
[4] Sanderson to Spring-Rice, 4 Nov. 1903. Ibid.
[5] MacDonald to Lansdowne, telegram No. 99, 7 Oct. 1903. F.O. 46/568.
[6] Lansdowne to Balfour, 23 Oct. 1903. Balfour MSS, Add. MSS 49728.
[7] Cambon, *Correspondance*, vol. ii, pp. 110, 117.
[8] B.D. II.250 (not printed, on the advice of Sanderson—see F.O. 27/3617).
[9] B.D. II.257; D.D.F. IV.58.

by it, and he now decided that a show of firmness would make Russia more ready to accept a compromise. It was in this spirit that he approached the problems which arose between the two countries towards the end of the year. When they were over, he told Cromer: 'I do not, however, at all regret that we should have succeeded in irritating them [the Russians] and I feel pretty sure that we shall not thereby have at all diminished the prospects of an agreement.'[1] He never lost sight of his ultimate goal, and when at the end of October he proposed to Balfour a guaranteed Japanese loan, he observed that 'the result might be to convince her [Russia] that she could not safely continue to flout us, and to bring about, what I have always hoped to see, a frank understanding between us as to Manchuria, Tibet, Afghanistan, Persia, etc.'[2]

He therefore drew up a sharp reply to the Russian note on Afghanistan[3] and sanctioned a Viceregal tour in the Persian Gulf for which Curzon had been pressing for some time.[4] Curzon was, however, told plainly that he must not given the impression of wishing to alter the *status quo* in the Gulf.[5] Lansdowne also proposed a government guarantee for a Japanese loan because, as he told Balfour, it would strengthen them and '"clinch" their friendship for us'.[6] The proposal was rejected by the Chancellor of the Exchequer[7]; but when, a month later, Lansdowne saw another way of helping the Japanese, he took it. The government of Chile had decided to sell two battleships, and the balance of naval power in the Far East was already so even that, as Lansdowne warned Japan, if Russia was allowed to buy them she would acquire a 'serious preponderance' there.[8] When the Japanese refused to buy in spite of this warning, Edward VII telegraphed to Balfour on 28 November that Britain should herself buy, and repeated his usual advice that 'we must show the Russians a firm hand'.[9] The Cabinet at its meeting of the 30th did decide to buy the ships.[10] But this was meant

[1] Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, pp. 286–7.
[2] Lansdowne to Balfour, 23 Oct. 1903. Balfour MSS, Add. MSS 49728.
[3] B.D. IV, pp. 519–20.
[4] Ronaldshay, *Lord Curzon*, vol. ii, pp. 313–14.
[5] Brodrick to Curzon, 6 Nov. 1903. F.O. 60/730.
[6] Lansdowne to Balfour, 23 Oct. 1903. Balfour MSS, Add. MSS 49728.
[7] Lansdowne to Balfour, 28 Oct. 1903. Ibid.
[8] Lansdowne to MacDonald, telegram No. 62, 27 Nov. 1903. F.O. 46/667.
[9] Edward VII to Balfour, telegram, 28 Nov. 1903. Balfour MSS, Add. MSS 49683.
[10] Balfour to Edward VII, telegram, 30 Nov. 1903. Ibid.

to be a demonstration for Russia, not an encouragement for Japan, and Lansdowne told the Japanese in unusually blunt language that 'it would be a source of regret to His Majesty's Government should this action in any way encourage the war party in Japan to make demands which might be considered unreasonable'.[1]

In all these cases, British policy was clear; but in Tibet, the most important new question to arise between Britain and Russia, British policy was contradictory and confused. By September it was plain that the Chinese and Tibetans were not prepared to negotiate at Khambajong,[2] and this made it more difficult to resist pressure from Curzon, who had always predicted that negotiations would be useless. The government, having insisted on the negotiations in the first place, felt that they had a responsibility to go further, and at the end of September Balfour, though still afraid of becoming 'permanently entangled' in Tibet, reluctantly sanctioned an advance to Gyangtse, half-way to Lhasa.[3] Hamilton, as one of his last official acts, transmitted this authorisation to Curzon on 1 October.[4]

This authorisation had not, however, received the sanction of the full Cabinet, and St John Brodrick, who shortly afterwards succeeded Hamilton at the India Office, was much less inclined to accept Curzon's forward policy in Tibet. He sent an anxious letter to Balfour on the 27th, warning him that Curzon intended ultimately to go to Lhasa and asking if the question could be reopened. Lansdowne, he added, was in favour of an immediate advance.[5] Brodrick's letter revived Balfour's own doubts. He replied that he too disliked the expedition,

> partly because I think we have as much on our hands as we can look after, partly because if we 'Manchurianize' what is technically a part of the Chinese Empire we may greatly weaken our diplomacy in the Far East. Again, who can yet say what the result of the Russo-Japanese negotiations is going to be? If they break down, and if Japan goes to war, who is going to lay long odds that we are not at loggerheads with Russia within six months? In that event, I should have supposed that *any* complications in Tibet, even on the small scale suggested by the Viceroy, might prove exceedingly embarrassing.

[1] MacDonald to Lansdowne, despatch No. 177, 6 Dec. 1903. F.O. 46/667.
[2] Lamb, *Britain and Chinese Central Asia*, pp. 290–1.
[3] Memo by Lansdowne, 29 Sept. 1903. F.O. 17/1746.
[4] Hamilton to Curzon, 1 Oct. 1903. Quoted in memo by Brodrick, 4 Nov. 1903. Ibid.
[5] Brodrick to Balfour, 27 Oct. 1903. Balfour MSS, Add. MSS 49720.

Nevertheless, Balfour was reluctant to overrule the Viceroy, who, he thought, knew local conditions best, and was willing to give immediate approval to the expedition if it was necessary for military reasons.[1] This, however, was all that Brodrick needed to telegraph to Curzon on the 29th holding up the expedition until the full Cabinet could consider it.[2] Meanwhile he circulated to his colleagues a memorandum summarising the position and making plain his own belief that the expedition should be stopped. He suggested four points for consideration: the risks of the expedition itself; the difficulty and expense of maintaining a mission at Lhasa, which was the Viceroy's real object; the effects of a violation of Chinese territory; and the wisdom of undertaking a small war when affairs in the Far East were so critical.[3]

The Cabinet meeting of 6 November did, however, sanction an advance to Gyangtse, but only under stringent conditions. Curzon had won this success because, as Brodrick said, Lansdowne supported him and because Balfour was unwilling to override altogether the advice of the local expert. But the Cabinet sought to impose a strict limit on the wilful Viceroy, and ruled that the expedition 'should not be allowed to lead to occupation or to permanent intervention in Tibetan affairs in any form' and must be withdrawn as soon as satisfaction had been obtained for the immediate grievances.[4] Curzon had had his way. The episode had however shown a growing divergence between him and the home government, and relations between Calcutta and London, embittered by personal antagonism between Brodrick and Curzon and by Curzon's headstrong character, began now to decline rapidly.

Lansdowne's two tactics—an appeal to France and firmness towards Russia—met with success. On 7 November Benckendorff told him of Lamsdorff's desire 'to remove all sources of misunderstanding between the two Governments and that there should be "a change for the better" in our relations'. He was equally conciliatory when he discussed the particular causes of conflict: he made no attempt to defend the latest Russian note on Afghanistan and implied that neither for this nor for the extreme policy being

[1] Balfour to Brodrick, 28 Oct. 1903. Ibid.
[2] Brodrick to Balfour, 29 Oct. 1903. Ibid.
[3] Memo by Brodrick, 4 Nov. 1903. F.O. 17/1746.
[4] Brodrick to Curzon, 6 Nov. 1903. Enclosure in I.O. to F.O. 7 Nov. 1903. F.O. Print (Tibet), vol. 8169, No. 10.

followed in the Far East was Lamsdorff responsible. He hinted that the Foreign Minister was now regaining his influence. Lansdowne was also thanked for his 'considerate and straightforward policy' in Macedonia.[1] This conversation was so encouraging that Lansdowne at once telegraphed to Spring-Rice not to present the despatch on Afghanistan drawn up in reply to the Russian note.[2]

The revived negotiations continued throughout November. On the 22nd Hardinge spoke to Benckendorff at Windsor and was assured by him that Russia was willing to recognise Afghanistan, Tibet, and Seistan as falling within the British sphere and to give guarantees that the relations she desired with the Afghans would be local and non-political. In Persia, Russia opposed partition, but her interests on the Gulf were purely commercial.[3] Three days later, Lansdowne himself laid definite proposals before the Ambassador. He laid claim to predominance in Seistan, Tibet, and Afghanistan, but offered in return to allow limited Russo-Afghan relations and to recognise the 'predominating interest' of Russia in Manchuria. He still suggested that Persia should be partitioned.[4] Lansdowne noted that Benckendorff had made no serious objections, and hopes of an agreement rose. A detailed discussion on Persia, the most difficult question, was held on 3 December and took the negotiations a little further.[5] By the 4th Hardinge was telling Bertie: 'I for the first time believe that it might be possible to come to an agreement.'[6] At about this time Lansdowne was circulating to the Cabinet drafts of an entente,[7] and it was in the course of the discussion of these that Balfour, on the 21st, entered his caveat.[8] He was, however, prepared to accept Lansdowne's policy as a temporary palliative, and on New Year's Day Lansdowne circulated to all his colleagues a final draft, approved by the Prime Minister. It followed the lines of Lansdowne's conversation with Benckendorff.[9] In again insisting on the partition of Persia, it showed that Balfour's new strategic ideas, still being worked out in the Committee of Imperial Defence, had not yet had a direct effect on foreign policy.

[1] B.D. II.258. [2] B.D. IV, p. 520. [3] B.D. IV.181(b). [4] B.D. IV.182.
[5] Lansdowne to Spring-Rice, despatch No. 346, 3 Dec. 1903. F.O. 65/1658.
[6] C. Hardinge to Bertie, 4 Dec. 1903. Bertie MSS, Series A.
[7] On 17 December Lansdowne sent Balfour a 'fresh draft' (missing) which had been 'a good deal altered since you saw it'. Balfour MSS, Add. MSS 49728.
[8] See pp. 98–9.
[9] Memo by Lansdowne, 1 Jan. 1904. F.O. Memoranda, F.O. General 60.

Meanwhile the French negotiations were also moving forward. During October and November substantial agreement was reached between Cambon and Lansdowne on Egypt and Morocco. Lansdowne rejected Cambon's proposal that Britain's advance in Egypt should proceed *pari passu* with France's in Morocco, but at Cromer's suggestion he did agree to retain the Caisse, although with strictly limited functions.[1] Otherwise agreement was reached along the lines laid down in the summer, with Britain recognising French preponderance in Morocco upon the three conditions already settled, and France recognising the legitimacy of the British occupation of Egypt. Difficulty came, surprisingly, from one of the minor questions. Cambon on 27 October revived the old French demand for the cession of the Gambia[2] and insisted upon it throughout the subsequent negotiations. Cromer would have liked to give way,[3] but Gorst, his agent in London, told him that 'the government are inclined to be too stiff as regards minor points and they will not hear of the cession of the Gambia'.[4]

More important was Cromer's sudden anxiety about the reaction of Germany. The consent of all the Great Powers was legally necessary before reforms could be introduced in the Egyptian administration; and Cromer now began to press Lansdowne to guard against the possibility of German obstruction. A letter of 1 November recommended that the Caisse should be maintained in nominal existence in return for a promise by France to join Britain in obtaining the consent of the other Powers to the new arrangements. Britain should further make it clear that if this consent was refused she would carry through the reforms '*recte si possumus, si non, quocunque modo*', and that she would expect French acquiescence.[5] This was the first reference on either side to the possibility that Britain and France would lend each other diplomatic support in carrying out the terms of the entente.

A further letter from Cromer on 6 November said more explicitly that 'we should have a very clear understanding with them [the French] that, if we brush German opposition aside, they must not object'. Cromer commented that 'this attitude may conceivably

[1] Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, pp. 283–4; B.D. II.376.
[2] B.D. II.373.
[3] Cromer to Lansdowne, 22 Oct. 1903. Lansdowne MSS, vol. viii.
[4] Gorst to Cromer, 17 Dec. 1903. Cromer MSS, vol. vi.
[5] Cromer to Lansdowne, 1 Nov. 1903. Lansdowne MSS, vol. viii.

lead us rather a long way, but if once our position with the French was clear I should not mind that'.[1] Lansdowne replied on the 17th:

> I quite see your point about Germany. I have felt from the first, and so has Cambon, that we shall have to reckon with Germany. Metternich has made several enquiries as to what we were about and the newspapers have made so many disclosures of late that they probably know the whole story even if they did not know it before. It would not surprise me if they were to ask for Rabat. I do not know what our Admiralty would say to this, but the French have always assumed that we were to keep other Powers out of Morocco, and the Spaniards cannot bear Germany and impute to her the most sinister designs.[2]

Cromer continued to remind Lansdowne of the wider meaning of the entente. On 12 December he wrote that 'one of the main attractions in the whole business to the authorities of the Quai d'Orsay is the hope of leading up to an Anglo-Russian arrangement, and thus isolating Germany'.[3] Nothing could be plainer; but there is nothing to show that Balfour and Lansdowne, engrossed in the desperate crisis in the Far East, fully absorbed the significance of Cromer's information. Lansdowne did embody Cromer's Egyptian proposals in his next draft to Cambon[4]; but, according to Gorst, writing to Cromer on 4 December, 'neither Lord Lansdowne nor Sanderson seem to be much afraid of any eventual German opposition, and as we have done our duty by them in calling their attention to the matter, I have said nothing more'.[5]

All this was for the future. The immediate preoccupation was with the gathering crisis in the Far East. Further Russian proposals, presented at Tokyo on 12 December, were described by Komura as 'most unsatisfactory',[6] and on the 15th the leading general in the Japanese Army told MacDonald that, in view of the steady build-up of Russian strength, it would be better for Japan that war should take place at once before Russia enjoyed overwhelming power.[7] By now, it was apparent that unless a great

[1] Zetland, *Lord Cromer*, p. 278.
[2] Lansdowne to Cromer, 17 Nov. 1903. Lansdowne MSS, vol. viii. Newton, op. cit., p. 285.
[3] Cromer to Lansdowne, 12 Dec. 1903. Lansdowne MSS, vol. viii.
[4] B.D. II.376.
[5] Gorst to Cromer, 4 Dec. 1903. Cromer MSS, vol. vi.
[6] B.D. II.260.
[7] MacDonald to Lansdowne, telegram No. 129, 15 Dec. 1903. F.O. 46/568.

effort was made, war would break out in the Far East, and Lansdowne would at last be faced by the crisis which, since 1900, he had been trying to avoid. He determined on a supreme effort to avert the danger.

7

The Russo-Japanese War December 1903–March 1905

1

THE Cabinet had long ago decided that Britain could not afford to be dragged into a Far Eastern war. Now, as Russia and Japan stood on the brink of hostilities, Austen Chamberlain, the new Chancellor of the Exchequer, began to press for a reduction in military and naval spending. 'I am bound to say', he told his colleagues, 'that, in the present condition of our finances, it would, in my opinion, be impossible to finance a great war, except at an absolutely ruinous cost.'[1] War, therefore, must, if possible, be avoided. With the consent of the Cabinet,[2] Lansdowne took the obvious step of an appeal to France. On 11 December, after he had warned Cambon that British public opinion might not allow the Government to stand by and see Japan crushed, they both agreed that it was the duty of Britain and France to 'pour as much cold water as possible upon the embers' and to 'exercise a moderating influence upon the disputants'.[3]

As the situation continued to deteriorate, Lansdowne determined, as he told Balfour, to 'leave no stone unturned' to prevent war. On 22 December he therefore suggested a definite appeal for mediation, not only to France but also to the United States. If Russia could be persuaded to be conciliatory in Manchuria he would bring pressure on the Japanese and 'tell [them] distinctly that they must be content with the best bargain they can get as to Corea'.[4] Japan was to be abandoned.

Balfour disagreed. He had no faith in the Japanese and believed

[1] Memo by A. Chamberlain, 7 Dec. 1903. A. Chamberlain MSS, Box AC 17, Package 59.
[2] Dugdale, *Balfour*, vol. i, p. 376.
[3] B.D. II.259.
[4] Lansdowne to Balfour, 22 Dec. 1903. Balfour MSS, Add. MSS 49728.

them to be 'both diplomatically and strategically . . . in a very helpless position'.[1] But he would do nothing to prevent the outbreak of war between them and the Russians, and he would do nothing to help them except under the letter of the treaty. He argued that although the result of a war between Russia and Japan alone would probably be a Russian victory, that victory would be a limited one. Japan was an island and could not herself be conquered and occupied. Such a limited Russian victory would be to the advantage and not to the disadvantage of Great Britain.

> Stronger in the Far East for many purposes she may perhaps be. But we have to fear her chiefly as (a) the ally of France; (b) the invader of India; (c) the dominating influence in Persia; and (d) the possible disturber of European peace. For these purposes she will be not stronger but weaker after over-running Corea. Weaker because she will have diminished her financial resources and greatly increased her financial liabilities; weaker because she will be more vulnerable and because she will have at her Eastern gates at least one unsleeping and implacable enemy; weaker because her fleet will not only be diminished by war, but, bound to the East by the necessity of watching Japan, will be unable freely to take part in strategical combinations against Britain in the west.[2]

In opposing Lansdowne's desire to bring pressure on Japan, Balfour was therefore inspired by no friendship for that country; rather he was moved by fear and dislike of Russia, fear so great that he thought she could only be weakened by being allowed to over-extend herself. And he still believed, as he had in 1901, that the Far East was not an area of the first importance to Britain.

This was of course a severely logical policy, and for that reason it did not appeal to his colleagues. Lansdowne replied on the 24th with a list of three dangers that Britain would run if she allowed war to break out:

> (1) The possibility that our ally may be crushed.
>
> (2) The possibility that we ourselves may become implicated, not on account of our treaty engagement to Japan but because the British public will not sit still while the crushing is being done.
>
> (3) The aggravation of our present financial difficulties, already grave enough.[3]

[1] Balfour to Lansdowne, 22 Dec. 1903. Ibid.
[2] Dugdale, *Balfour*, vol. i, pp. 381–3.
[3] Dugdale, op. cit., vol. i, pp. 378–9.

Lansdowne was more interested in the Far East than Balfour was, and he had a much more considered and balanced conception of the political order which he would like to see established in that region. He was still anxious for a Russian entente and told Chamberlain on the 22nd that the present moment was a suitable time for making one.[1] He was willing to bring pressure on Japan to promote such an understanding. He shrank from the prospect of war with Russia. 'If we throw in our lot with Japan that will mean war with Russia all over the world and we have no longer to consider merely the local conditions in the Far East.'[2] But he was also, as he told Balfour, unhappy about the prospect of standing by and seeing Japan crushed: a naval defeat 'might render her an almost negligible factor in Far Eastern politics instead of, as at present, a potential ally of great importance to us'.[3] He was not dogmatically anti-Russian or pro-Japanese any more than he was dogmatically anti-German; rather he hoped to see both Russia and Japan given reasonable satisfaction in the Far East.

Selborne took a third view again. 'The Prime Minister's outline of the situation is attractive,' he wrote, 'but I fear it has a fatal flaw in its argument.' As the relative strengths of the two fleets stood at the moment, Russia should, on paper, win a naval action, but greater efficiency might give the victory to Japan; on the other hand, when reinforcements then on the way to the Far East had strengthened the Russian fleet 'it ought not to be possible for them [the Japanese] to win a fleet action'. Like Lansdowne, Selborne believed that a Russian naval victory 'would have very serious results for us': 'it would inevitably entail increased naval expenditure on our part. It would be said that we had allowed our ally to be crushed at sea. What would be the value of that reputation?'[4] The naval balance of power would be changed 'wholly to our disadvantage and I am quite sure essentially to our great loss'. There was also the danger that Japan would react to defeat not, as Balfour claimed, by implacable hostility to Russia, but by deciding to enjoy her conqueror's patronage as a client state.[5]

Up to this point, Selborne agreed with Lansdowne; but he was

[1] Lansdowne to A. Chamberlain, 22 Dec. 1903. A. Chamberlain MSS, Box AC 17, Package 58. [2] Ibid.
[3] Lansdowne to Balfour, 24 Dec. 1903. A. Chamberlain MSS. Ibid.
[4] Selborne to Lansdowne, 24 Dec. 1903. Ibid.
[5] Selborne to Balfour, 31 Dec. 1903. Balfour MSS, Add. MSS 49707.

much more anti-Russian than the Foreign Secretary and was even ready to contemplate British entry into the war. If Britain, as he believed, could not afford to see Japan smashed by Russia, 'does it not follow', he asked, 'that we cannot wait to make up our minds till after Japan *has* been smashed?'[1] He hinted that Britain should herself stop the Russian reinforcements (then in the Mediterranean) reaching the Far East.[2] But this might bring in France—'an appalling calamity', thought Selborne. Like Lansdowne he wanted to 'take France into our fullest confidence and get her to join with us in exerting such pressure that there shall not be war'[3]; but he was also prepared to go further and 'let them [the French] see plainly that we could not allow the Japanese to be crushed'.[4] Selborne's anti-Russian sentiment explains why, on the immediate point under consideration, he supported Balfour and opposed Lansdowne's scheme of bringing pressure on Japan to moderate her terms.[5]

Austen Chamberlain shared Selborne's anti-Russian feeling. He told Lansdowne that if a Russo-Japanese war broke out, it would be 'the proper time for us to secure, and to secure *promptly*, whatever we want in places where Russia is our rival'. Once free from her Japanese anxieties, 'her inclination to negotiate a settlement of outstanding questions with us will evaporate and . . . we shall find her very troublesome and not a little aggressive for all Benckendorff's smooth words'.[6] He also believed that the Japanese should be allowed to strike at once, while they had a temporary superiority, and that Britain should do nothing to discourage them.[7] His summary of the position was:

> If they fight and win, 'tant mieux'.
>
> If they fight and lose, Corea is gone but Japan will remain. It cannot be occupied by Russia.
>
> If they make terms without fighting, at any rate those terms will be the act of their own ministers and those ministers and not the British Government will bear the blame if they are unpopular with Japan.[8]

[1] Selborne to Lansdowne, 21 Dec. 1903. Add. MSS 49728.
[2] Selborne to Lansdowne, 24 Dec. 1903. A. Chamberlain MSS, Box AC 17. Package 58.
[3] Selborne to Balfour, 21 Dec. 1903. Balfour MSS, Add. MSS 49728.
[4] Selborne to Balfour, 31 Dec. 1903. Balfour MSS, Add. MSS 49707.
[5] Selborne to Balfour, 25 Dec. and 31 Dec. 1903. Ibid.
[6] A. Chamberlain to Lansdowne, 21 Dec. 1903. Balfour MSS, Add. MSS 49728.
[7] Memo by A. Chamberlain, 25 Dec. 1903. A Chamberlain MSS, Box AC 17, Package 58.
[8] A. Chamberlain to Lansdowne, 30 Dec. 1903. Balfour MSS, Add. MSS 49735.

The military members of the Army Council were 'unanimous in their opinion that on military grounds it is eminently desirable that Great Britain should range herself on the side of Japan before war is declared and so make it impossible for Russia to destroy the Japanese fleet'. They even brushed aside the fear of French intervention because the 'military advantages of that course and the disadvantages of any other course are overwhelming'. Britain would in any case have to intervene to prevent the Russian fleet gaining control of the Far East; do we want, asked the spokesman for the Army Council, 'war against France and Russia with a strong confident Japan as our ally? Or war against France and Russia with a weak, beaten Japan as our ally?'[1]

Upon receiving this memorandum, Arnold-Forster, the Secretary of State for War, admitted that 'from the purely military point of view . . . there is no answer to it'. But everything else pointed to the need to avoid war. 'Consols at 88. The Army Reserves, 68,000. Our people weary of war. Russia an enemy, Germany an enemy, France an enemy by Treaty if not by conviction, and the U.S.A. looking out for a profit from other people's failures.' Nevertheless, the strength of the Army Council's reasoning could not be overlooked, and Arnold-Forster hoped that the Admiralty would concentrate as many ships as possible in the Far East.[2]

The soldiers returned to the attack in the Committee of Imperial Defence after Christmas. Nicholson, the Director of Military Intelligence, gave its members a forecast of the course of the war which, while it did not dismiss Japan's chances as Balfour had done, was still pessimistic. At best, the result would be a stalemate; at worst Russia would take all Korea and thereafter Japan herself.[3] Altham, Nicholson's assistant, then examined the likely results of British intervention. Even if France joined Russia, 'the British and

[1] Brackenbury to Arnold-Forster, 23 Dec. 1903. A. Chamberlain MSS, Box AC 17, Package 58.

[2] Arnold-Forster to Lansdowne, 25 Dec. 1903. Ibid.

[3] Memo by D.M.I., 28 Dec. 1903. C.I.D. Records, Cab. 4/1, Paper 12B. All depended on the result of the initial battle at sea. There were four possible cases. (1) A Japanese victory. Japan would then overrun Manchuria but, if the war continued, would then be driven back as Russia brought her strength to bear. She should, however, be able to consolidate a defensive position leaving her in control of southern Manchuria. (2) An indecisive result. The war would then be confined to Korea, of which Russia's numerical superiority should give her 'at least' the northern half. (3) If Russia avoided a naval action, Japan would be unwise to do more than occupy South Korea to defend it against Russian reinforcements. (4) A victory by Russia would place her in possession of all Korea and menace Japan herself.

Japanese fleets would have no difficulty in mastering their opponents', while the Japanese Army would compensate for the numerical deficiency of the British Army. Altham concluded that public opinion and reasons of prestige might compel intervention and that Britain should make preparations at once; in any case, it would be dangerous to wait until Japan had been defeated. Nicholson agreed generally, and Roberts, the Commander-in-Chief, added that Russia should be notified that, if a breach took place, Britain would join Japan.[1]

There remained only the King, who was at first inclined to support Lansdowne. He told Balfour on Christmas Day that 'I earnestly hope that our good offices may be brought to bear strongly on the latter country [Japan] to induce them not to proceed to hostilities as it would indeed be a most serious matter if this country were drawn into the quarrel—That we should be engaged in another war so soon after the South African war has been brought to a close would be most disastrous.'[2] When, however, Balfour explained his view, the King, persuaded in the same direction by Knollys, was converted.[3]

Lansdowne was therefore left without any supporters for his policy of bringing pressure on Japan. The coalition ranged against him had the most diverse motives, but they all had one thing in common: hostility toward Russia. There was no feeling in the minds of the Cabinet that the negotiations for French and Russian ententes during the previous year had been the beginning of a great diplomatic re-alignment. Attention was as always concentrated upon Russia, while there was almost no mention of Germany; the soldiers were even ready to go to war with France. Only Lansdowne stood apart—not because he was anti-German, but because he adopted a less dogmatic, more empirical, approach to diplomacy.

With Lansdowne's policy rejected, Britain stood aloof from the developing crisis in the Far East. The Japanese made efforts to obtain some tangible sign of British sympathy, but without success. Hayashi told Lansdowne on 29 December that if Russia would not consider Japan's latest proposals she would resort to

[1] Memo by E. A. Altham, 31 Dec. 1903 and notes by Nicholson and Brackenbury. C.I.D. Records, Cab. 4/1, Paper 13B.
[2] Edward VII to Balfour, 25 Dec. 1903. Balfour MSS, Add. MSS 49683.
[3] Knollys to Balfour, no date (in reply to letter from Balfour of 28 Dec.). Ibid.

'energetic measures' and she 'wished to know whether [she] might look to us for support and in what direction'. Lansdowne merely replied that the Alliance would not apply to a war between Japan and Russia alone. Hayashi then suggested that Britain could help by means of a loan.[1] This proposal was, however, rejected at once by Balfour and Chamberlain. Balfour thought that a Japanese loan would be 'as near as possible "an act of war"',[2] and Chamberlain pointed out that Britain was already in considerable financial difficulties and must harvest her resources in case she was brought into the war herself.[3] Lansdowne therefore refused Hayashi's request.[4] He was himself, as he explained to Chamberlain, anxious 'to avoid the appearance of snubbing' Japan, and he commended a modified Japanese request that Britain should help in a conversion of the Japanese debt.[5] But this too was rejected by the Chancellor for financial reasons.[6] The Japanese, who were crippled by financial weakness, were bitterly disappointed, and Hayashi told Lansdowne with some asperity that 'it would be difficult to convince them [the Japanese Government] that we could not get the money if we really wished to do so'.[7] Anglo-Japanese relations were in fact strained; for neither side had the Alliance lined up to its expectations. The normally reticent Lansdowne even complained to Cambon about Japan's behaviour. 'Le Japon ne nous a jamais consultés, jamais prévenus, il a negocié avec la Russie sans nous aviser de rien, nous, ses alliés!' According to the same source, the King told Benckendorff: 'Nous avons un traité avec le Japon, c'est vrai, mais cela ne veut pas dire que nous soyons en relations intimes avec les Japonais.'[8] No doubt the British were trying to justify their failure to mediate; but Lansdowne and the King certainly felt impatience with their inconvenient allies.

There remained one more decision to take before war broke out. The Russians had a large fleet in the Black Sea, and, with the naval balance of power in the Far East so even, it was possible that they would send it through the Straits, in defiance of treaty obligations,

[1] B.D. II.265. [2] Dugdale, *Balfour*, vol. i, p. 380.
[3] Memo by A. Chamberlain, 1 Jan. 1904. A. Chamberlain MSS, Box AC 17, Package 58.
[4] Lansdowne to MacDonald, despatch No. 4, 1 Jan. 1904. F.O. 46/576.
[5] Lansdowne to A. Chamberlain, 2 Jan. 1904. A. Chamberlain MSS, Box AC 17, Package 58.
[6] A. Chamberlain to Lansdowne, 4 Jan. 1904. Ibid.
[7] B.D. II.269. [8] Cambon, *Correspondance*, vol. ii, p. 123.

to the seat of war. Hayashi asked on 11 January what Britain would do if this happened. Lansdowne replied that he could not give a specific undertaking but that he would certainly regard such an action as a grave violation of treaty engagements.[1] On the same day he asked Selborne for the Admiralty view, telling him that 'it would, I think, be impossible for us to overlook so serious a disregard of our Treaty rights. Nor I think would public opinion allow us to do it.' The least Britain could do would be to refuse the Russian ships coaling facilities and to deny them the right of using the Suez Canal.[2] Selborne's professional advisers, Kerr and Battenberg, were cautious and warned him that the other Powers would not join Britain in resisting a violation of the Rule of the Straits. Selborne, however, regarded this view as 'too logical for human nature': 'to allow our ally to be crushed by an enemy by a breach of a Treaty, which is otherwise wholly to our disadvantage, would be more, I think, than our people could stomach or ought to stomach'.[3] With this Lansdowne agreed. He proposed to tell the Russians that British neutrality would be conditional upon their observance of the Rule of the Straits.[4] Balfour concurred: he believed that if the Russians could be made to appear the aggressors, then, 'as well as for a great many general reasons', France would be unlikely to intervene.[5] Scott was, therefore, instructed on the 30th to tell the Russians, if they showed signs of preparing to move the Black Sea Fleet, that Britain would not allow it to take part in the war.[6] However great the British desire to remain neutral, it was plain that the government could not accept, or would not be allowed to accept, the humiliation involved in the passage of Russian ships through the Straits to attack Britain's ally.

Russia and Japan now moved towards war with gathering speed. Even now, Lansdowne hankered after some form of mediation, and he told Cambon on 3 February that if Russia accepted a compromise on the main point at issue, 'nous exercerons notre action pour la faire accepter'.[7] To Hayashi he declared that he 'saw signs of a movement in favour—I would not say of mediation—but of an

[1] B.D. II.274.
[2] Lansdowne to Selborne, 11 Jan. 1904. A. Chamberlain MSS, Box AC 17. Package 58.
[3] Selborne to Lansdowne, 14 Jan. 1904. Ibid.
[4] Lansdowne to Selborne, 15 Jan. 1904. Ibid.
[5] Memo by Balfour, 18 Jan. 1904. Ibid.
[6] B.D. II.285. [7] D.D.F. IV.239.

effort by the Powers to discover a solution which both Parties might accept without loss of dignity'.[1] But he was of course acting without Cabinet authorisation, and on the 7th, speaking to Benckendorff, he withdrew the offer he had made to Cambon. The puzzled Cambon rightly attributed this to a decision of the Cabinet.[2] This was his last effort; on the afternoon of the 9th news arrived in London of the Japanese naval attack which opened the war.

2

The outbreak of the war posed no immediate problems in the Far East itself. Lansdowne at once assured Benckendorff that neither Britain nor Japan 'desired to read into it [the Alliance] anything which it did not contain',[3] and he agreed with Cambon that the conflict must remain limited.[4] But some preparation had to be made against the event of a Russian victory; and once again it was hoped that the United States would play the rôle of deliverer. Balfour, writing to Lansdowne on 11 February, predicted that when Russia came within sight of victory she would then, in order to ensure substantial gains from the war, pick a quarrel with China. A Russo-Chinese war would then lead to 'the immediate annexation of Manchuria and other consequences, not less serious, to follow'. He hoped that, when these dangers materialised, the Americans would be ready to join Britain in going to war to prevent them, and he pressed Lansdowne to begin at once the process of persuasion that would ultimately bring them to this point. If they could be induced to go to war to defend Chinese integrity, 'it would', he declared, 'open a new era in the history of the world'.[5] Balfour's clear recognition of the momentousness of American entry into world politics demonstrates the clarity and insight of his intellect; but his hope that America could be brought to abandon isolation at such a time, and in such circumstances, argues also a certain lack of practical sense.

The immediate problem presented by the outbreak of the war was however not in the Far East but in Macedonia. In October the Austrian and Russian Foreign Ministers had worked out the

[1] B.D. II.284. [2] D.D.F. IV.246.
[3] Lansdowne to Scott, despatch No. 48, 9 Feb. 1904. F.O. 65/1677.
[4] Lansdowne to Monson, despatch No. 49, 8 Feb. 1904. F.O. 27/3662.
[5] Balfour to Lansdowne, 11 Feb. 1904. Balfour MSS, Add. MSS 49728.

'Mürzsteg Punctation', a programme of more extensive reforms than that they had supported earlier in the year. Because the reforms were more extensive they eased Lansdowne's immediate problems; but by associating the Austrian and Russian Consuls in the administration of Macedonia, they increased the jealousies of those who already disliked the lead taken by these two Powers. At least Austria and Russia did balance each other; but the outbreak of war in the Far East carried with it the danger that Russia, absorbed in fighting Japan, would leave Austria a free hand in the Balkans. The Italians, always jealous of their dignity as a Balkan power, at once saw a danger that Austria would 'extend her dominion as far as Salonika'. Tittoni, their Foreign Minister, pressed for a promise of British help in resisting this, and, encouraged by the French Ambassador, proposed an Anglo-Franco-Italian exchange of views.[1]

Although Lansdowne did not dismiss altogether the possibility of such an initiative on the part of Austria, he still thought that, if a crisis did come, it was more likely to take the form of 'a renewal of disorders necessitating the intervention of the Powers and an "expanded" scheme of reforms'.[2] The fear of this which had in the past driven Britain towards France and Italy was now reinforced by a more positive motive. In a memorandum in February Balfour argued that if a Turco-Bulgarian war broke out and the Bulgarians won, it would be impolitic as well as unpopular to deprive them of their gains. 'The Bulgarians', wrote Balfour, 'are the only nationality in the Balkans with the making of a nation in them, and . . . they would be much more efficient guardians of the Straits than Turkey seems ever likely to be.'[3] This conclusion emphasised still more the gulf between Britain and the Mürzsteg Powers and made her much more likely, for reasons of her own, to respond to Tittoni's overture. But although Lansdowne told Bertie (now Ambassador in Rome) that 'I attach the greatest importance to keeping in close touch with Italy over the Balkan Question',[4] Italian help alone was of course insufficient. What therefore became 'most important if true' was Tittoni's indication that France

[1] Bertie to Lansdowne, 10 Feb. 1904. F.O. Print (S.E. Europe), vol. 8277, No. 149.
[2] Lansdowne to Bertie, 16 Feb. 1904. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xvii.
[3] Memo by Balfour (no date but within a month of the outbreak of the war), Balfour MSS, Add. MSS 49698. Balfour to Lansdowne, 22 Feb. 1904. Add. MSS 49728.
[4] Lansdowne to Bertie, 16 Feb. 1904. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xvii.

would act with them. 'The idea', declared Lansdowne, 'would find much favour here and should be encouraged.'[1]

A French entente therefore became all the more necessary. Unfortunately the negotiations had reached deadlock. The French were persisting in their demand for the Gambia, or an equivalent concession in Nigeria which Lansdowne described as 'quite unreasonable'.[2] Pressure by Cromer, who urged that a breakdown would be 'little short of a calamity',[3] produced an offer in early February of the Îles de Los off West Africa, but only in exchange for a complete cession of French rights in the New Hebrides, another area of dispute.[4] This offer Cambon refused on 18 February because of the counter-concession demanded.[5] It was then that the Macedonian question became acute, and it probably played the leading part in inducing the Cabinet, at its meeting of 25 February, to make an unconditional offer of the Îles de Los. Balfour, writing to the King, probably made an oblique reference to Macedonia when he spoke of 'the desirability of coming to some arrangement with France—a desirability by no means diminished by the present position of European affairs'.[6] The King agreed that 'we should if possible have no "bone of contention" at present with the French'.[7]

Meanwhile Lansdowne was feeling his way forward in Macedonia. His first step was to approach Cambon. He stated that if war broke out in the Balkans British public opinion would not allow it to be settled by Austria and Russia alone, and he suggested that Britain, France, and Italy should 'come to an understanding as to the action which they might adopt in [this] case'.[8] Although at first Cambon was friendly, it soon became apparent that France could not allow herself to be separated from Russia. Cambon explained with complete frankness on 25 and 27 February that the Russians, when approached by Delcassé, had refused to go beyond the Mürzsteg scheme, and that France must follow them. He did however promise to continue entirely private and unofficial con-

[1] Ibid.
[2] B.D. II.380. Minutes of 29th meeting of C.I.D., 4 Jan. 1904, C.I.D. Records, Cab. 2/1. Lansdowne to Cromer, 5 Jan. 1904. Lansdowne MSS, vol. viii.
[3] B.D. II.387.
[4] Cabinet report, Balfour to the King, 4 Feb. 1904. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xxix.
[5] B.D. II.390.
[6] Cabinet report, Balfour to the King, 26 Feb. 1904. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xxix.
[7] Knollys to Balfour, 28 Feb. 1904. Balfour MSS, Add. MSS 49684.
[8] B.D. V, pp. 67–8.

versations on possible alternatives.[1] Lansdowne concluded that 'the French Government wish to keep us in good humour but are a little afraid of being carried along too fast'.[2] There the matter rested: there was no Macedonian uprising in the spring, and Goluchowski and Tittoni met at Abbazia and settled their differences, at least temporarily. But the brief episode had given additional impetus to the Anglo-French negotiations and demonstrated the need for co-operation with the French in yet another part of the world.

Cambon accepted the unconditional offer of the Îles de Los, and the last major difficulty disappeared. The two countries now seemed to be so close together that they could proceed to the final drafting. It was at this stage, at the last moment and with only the barest consideration, that the most important article of all crept in—the stipulation that Britain would give France diplomatic support in carrying out the terms of the agreement in Morocco. Cromer had already proposed that Britain should demand French help against German obstruction in Egypt, but, as Gorst said, Lansdowne attached so little importance to this that it had since fallen out of sight. Now, on 14 March, Cromer revived his plan that France should agree 'to give us a completely free hand to act as occasion may require in the event of its being impossible to obtain consent of the other Powers'. 'We are almost sure', he explained, 'to have much difficulty with Germany.'[3] The first British draft, presented on 16 March, accordingly incorporated this proposal as a secret article, although it made no promise of British support in Morocco.[4] But Delcassé rejected this article, and his draft, communicated on the 21st, made no mention of future diplomatic support, either by Britain in Morocco or by France in Egypt. He was ready, if necessary, to support British attempts to obtain the consent of the other Powers, but he would not engage to support Britain in overriding their opposition.[5] He observed to Cambon that 'le Gouvernement britannique ne saurait trouver mauvais que nous nous abstenions de l'aider auprès des autres Puissances à affirmer sa situation en Égypte puisque nous ne lui demandons pas de nous rendre le même service dans la réalisation de nos vues sur le Maroc'.[6] On the 22nd,

[1] B.D. V, p. 70. F.O. Print (S.E. Europe), vol. 8277, No. 272.
[2] Lansdowne to O'Conor, 1 March 1904. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xxvii.
[3] B.D. II.400. [4] B.D. II, pp. 374–95.
[5] D.D.F. IV, pp. 471–2. [6] D.D.F. IV, p. 472.

however, Lansdowne, who was under continuing pressure from Cromer, insisted on such a French pledge in Egypt.[1] Cambon refused to give way. 'Je n'ai pas laissé croire que vous puissiez céder sur ce point', he told Delcassé[2]; and Delcassé himself minuted: 'A chacun d'obtenir l'exécution des clauses qui lui sont favorables.'[3] On the 24th, Cambon was summoned to the Foreign Office and there told of Balfour's opinion that this refusal 'nous laisse aux prises avec les autres Puissances qui peuvent tout refuser; elle (France) ne nous concède donc rien ou presque rien'. The Ambassador warned Delcassé that the British would not surrender this point.[4] It was to meet this situation that Delcassé proposed for the first time a clause whereby the two governments agreed to offer each other diplomatic support in executing the agreement in Egypt *and in Morocco*.[5] He was then able to accept a secret article promising to support Britain in overriding the refusal of the other Powers in Egypt after 1910. The British, without hesitation, accepted their new obligation, and the entente was signed on 8 April.[6] Although Lansdowne in August was careful to tell the German Ambassador that Britain could not be pledged by the new article to dispose of the rights of third Powers,[7] events had once again conspired to drive Britain and Germany apart. By accepting the most important article in the entente at the last moment and without discussion the British had once again shown that they did not realise its European significance.

The immediate task now was to obtain the consent of the other Powers to the Khedivial Decree in which the changes agreed to in the entente were embodied. Hopes of Russian consent were especially bright. The desire of the Foreign Office for a Russian entente had survived the outbreak of the war and indeed received a powerful impetus when in May Charles Hardinge went to St Petersburg as Ambassador. Hardinge regarded the maintenance of contact with the Russians while the war lasted and the conclusion of an understanding when peace came as the object of his mission in Russia.[8] Lansdowne too told Benckendorff that he hoped general discussions could be resumed 'at a more opportune moment'.[9]

[1] D.D.F. IV, p. 483. French draft and Lansdowne's amendments in Cromer MSS, vol. xvii, Part 2. [2] D.D.F. IV, p. 483. [3] Ibid.
[4] D.D.F. IV.364. [5] D.D.F. IV.370.
[6] B.D. II, pp. 474–95. [7] B.D. III.62; G.P. XX–I.6527.
[8] Hardinge to Chirol, 3 June 1904, Hardinge MSS, vol. vi. [9] B.D. IV.183–4.

Edward VII was, according to Hardinge, 'very pleased with the French entente and determined to bring off a similar arrangement with Russia',[1] and during a visit to Copenhagen in April told Isvolsky, the Russian Minister there, of his desire for one.[2] The King, in fact, made no secret of his hostility to the Japanese and the Japanese Alliance either to the French or the Russians,[3] and indeed Lansdowne had to deliver a tactful lecture on his indiscretions.[4] The King's enthusiasm for a Russian entente was, however, of great value to Hardinge; for it was only with the support of the King that he could hold the attention of the Czar, and it was only with the cordial approval of the Czar that negotiations for an entente could have any success. With the help of an autograph letter from Edward VII Hardinge was able on 27 May to extract from the Czar his assent to a policy of entente,[5] while Lamsdorff, who had always been friendly, told him on 8 June that the establishment of better Anglo-Russian relations was 'the dream of his official career'.[6]

Just before the conclusion of the French entente Lansdowne had re-affirmed his belief that 'France will endeavour as time goes on to bring us and Russia together'.[7] Almost at once he began to use her in this capacity. Hardinge and Bompard, the French Ambassador to Russia, worked closely together, while in London Lansdowne warned Cambon that war would follow if Russia sent her Black Sea Fleet through the Straits.[8] The French on their side were also anxious, as Lansdowne had expected, to draw their two friends together, and Cambon told Lansdowne of his government's desire for a general entente.[9] An immediate opportunity presented itself to French diplomacy. The Tibetan mission, which the Cabinet had sanctioned with such misgiving, had massacred a large number of Tibetan soldiers at the end of March and reached Gyangtse on 13 April. Benckendorff at once made inquiries,[10] and Lansdowne privately acknowledged that Russian anxiety was reasonable. 'I

[1] Hardinge to Bertie, 22 April 1904. Bertie MSS, Series A.
[2] B.D. IV.183. Lee, *King Edward VII*, vol. ii, pp. 284–7.
[3] Lee, loc. cit. Cambon, *Correspondance*, vol. ii, p. 137.
[4] Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, pp. 308–9.
[5] Hardinge to the King, 27 May 1904. Hardinge MSS, vol. vi.
[6] Hardinge to Lansdowne, despatch No. 283, 8 June 1904. F.O. 65/1680.
[7] Lansdowne to Lascelles, 23 March 1904. Lascelles MSS, vol. iii, Part 4.
[8] B.D. II, p. 401.
[9] Ibid.
[10] B.D. IV.290.

wonder what we should have said if it had been a Russian instead of a British "political mission"!'[1] But before a quarrel could take place the French stepped in. On 20 April Cambon proposed that Britain should give Russia assurances on Tibet in exchange for Russian adhesion to the Khedivial Decree.[2] Lansdowne took up this idea at once, and on 4 May made the offer to Benckendorff,[3] who accepted it on the 10th. In return for his government's acceptance of the Decree, Lansdowne gave him a memorandum promising that 'so long as no other Power endeavours to intervene in the affairs of Tibet, they [H.M.G.] will not attempt either to annex it, to establish a Protectorate over it, or in any way control its internal administration'.[4]

Growing co-operation with France accelerated the steady movement away from Germany. Lansdowne had reacted with some irritation to Germany's inconvenient position as the main obstacle to France in Morocco and to Britain in Egypt. She 'will squeeze us if she can', he told Cromer[5]; and he chose to regard Germany's reception of the entente as 'a test-case so far as [her] goodwill is concerned'.[6] When the Germans refused to efface themselves, as British policy demanded, but insisted that they could only consent to the Decree as part of a general settlement of all outstanding differences,[7] irritation turned to anger. Mallet regarded this as 'effrontery' on the part of 'those beastly Germans'[8], and the King minuted that it was 'political blackmailing'.[9] The Germans only made things worse when on 5 May they offered to surrender their minor claims for £70,000 and hinted that they would turn to Russia if they were not satisfied.[10] Even the normally cool Lansdowne thought the German demand 'a great piece of effrontery'. He told Lascelles that 'the suggestion that the consent of the

[1] Lansdowne to Balfour, 2 April 1904. Balfour MSS, Add. MSS 49728.
[2] Lansdowne to Monson, despatch No. 199, 20 April 1904. F.O. 27/3662.
[3] B.D. IV.184. [4] B.D. IV.291.
[5] Lansdowne to Cromer, 18 April 1904. Lansdowne MSS, vol. viii.
[6] Lansdowne to Lascelles, 23 March 1904. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xiii.
[7] Lascelles to Lansdowne, telegram No. 8, 25 April 1904, and despatch No. 114, 26 April 1904. Cromer MSS, vol. xvii, Part 2. These differences were very small: outstanding claims from the Samoa incident of 1899; claims for losses suffered by German citizens during the Boer War; and commercial relations between Germany and Canada, which had granted a preference to British goods.
[8] Mallet to Bertie, 20 May 1904. Bertie MSS, Series A.
[9] Minute on Lascelles to Lansdowne, private, 22 April 1904. F.O. 64/1593.
[10] Lascelles to Lansdowne, telegram No. 11, 5 May 1904. Cromer MSS, vol. xvii, Part 2.

German government to a perfectly innocuous arrangement in Egypt can only be bought at the price of concessions elsewhere does not become more palatable when we find it connected with an intimation that Germany is hesitating whether "she shall turn to the East or to the West"'.[1] By contrast, he was ready to make similar concessions to other Powers—to Russia in Tibet and to Italy in Abyssinia—to obtain their assent to this purely Egyptian arrangement.

When Lascelles warned Richthofen on 13 May that no good result could come from insisting on the payment of £70,000, the Germans finally gave way and agreed to restrict the arrangement between the two countries to Egypt alone.[2] But Lansdowne was still so suspicious of the Germans that, as he later explained to Bertie, he decided that 'the only thing to do was to hold Germany at arm's length and endeavour to come to terms with the other three'.[3] Russia had already given her consent, and there remained only Austria and Italy. On the 19th Lansdowne sent urgent telegrams to press for their adhesion,[4] holding out to the Italians the promise that he would, as they had long been asking, begin discussions with them on the future of Abyssinia.[5] This pressure produced the unconditional assent of Italy on the 22nd and of Austria on the 26th.[6] Germany was isolated. But even now agreement was held up by her demand that German commerce in Egypt should receive the same guarantees as French. Lansdowne was unwilling to satisfy this request because the promise to France of commercial liberty in Egypt had been conditional upon the same promise from her in Morocco[7]; but after a brief trial of strength he had to give way. At Lascelles's suggestion he offered most-favoured-nation treatment for thirty years, so putting Germany on the same footing as France; but, in order to avoid giving the Germans an exclusive position he extended the concession to Russia, Austria, and Italy.[8]

[1] Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, pp. 329–30.
[2] Lascelles to Lansdowne, despatch No. 126, 13 May 1904. Cromer MSS, vol. xvii, Part 2.
[3] Lansdowne to Bertie, 30 May 1904. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xvii.
[4] Telegrams No. 68 to Bertie and No. 62 to Plunkett, 19 May 1904. Cromer MSS, vol. xvii, Part 2.
[5] Lansdowne to Bertie, 27 April 1904. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xvii.
[6] Bertie to Lansdowne, telegram No. 25, 22 May 1904, and Plunkett to Lansdowne, telegram No. 41, 26 May 1904. Cromer MSS, vol. xvii, Part 2.
[7] Lansdowne to Metternich, 6 June 1904. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xiii.
[8] B.D. III.19–21; G.P. XX–I.6464, 6466.

The whole episode had generated considerable friction on both sides. Germany seemed to be the only remaining obstacle to the resolution of the dangerous Moroccan and Egyptian questions. It was natural for her to insist on her rights; it was natural for the British to resent this insistence. For some years Britain and Germany had been drifting apart under the pressure of circumstances; now, after the French entente, this movement was greatly accelerated. The entente had not been made, as far as Lansdowne was concerned, for anti-German reasons; but, once it was made, Britain was more and more impelled into the position of regarding Germany as the main obstacle to her new policies.

Meanwhile, a totally different event was also serving to emphasise Anglo-German rivalry. The Japanese had begun the war by a bold and successful attack on the Russian fleet in Port Arthur, and had succeeded in disabling many enemy ships and bottling the whole squadron up in the besieged harbour of Port Arthur. The destruction of the Russian fleet, of which this was the first stage, removed Britain's most dangerous rival at sea and concentrated her attention on the most likely remaining opponent—Germany. The immediate effect of these first battles around Port Arthur was that the German Navy replaced the Russian as the third largest in the world. Selborne drew attention to the change in a Cabinet memorandum in February.

> It is an error to suppose that the Two Power Standard . . . has ever had reference only to France and Russia. It has always referred to the two strongest Naval Powers at any given moment, and it has been identified in many minds with France and Russia only because France and Russia have for some years possessed the two most powerful navies next to our own. If the Russian navy does emerge from the present war materially weakened, the result will be that the Two Power Standard must hereafter be calculated with reference to the navies of France and Germany instead of those of France and Russia.

Selborne went on to repeat the arguments he had used in October 1902 to prove that Germany was a possible enemy and to show that her Navy 'might intervene with the utmost effect during the course of any struggle in which we might be involved'. He concluded that, in spite of the weakening of the Russian fleet, the naval estimates could not be reduced. Lansdowne agreed that 'we

cannot afford to relax, presently or prospectively, our efforts to strengthen the Empire by land or sea'.[1]

3

The new estrangement from Germany was sought for by neither Balfour nor Lansdowne and therefore developed only slowly and fitfully. During the summer of 1904, for example, there was a brief interval of better feeling between the two countries. At the end of June the King paid a highly successful state visit to Kiel. He told Bülow that 'ihm ein friedliches und freundliches Verhältnis zu Deutschland aufrichtig am Herzen liege'[2]; and even his personal meeting with the Kaiser was a success. Metternich reported that the visit had made an excellent impression.[3] The anti-German party in the Foreign Office at once took alarm. Mallet had already confessed that he was 'nervous about the visit to Kiel', and confided to Bertie that Balfour did not at all realise 'what may be expected from the Anglo-French understanding and would be ready to make an agreement with Germany tomorrow'. Mallet was convinced that nothing was to be gained from this and felt sure that 'if the government don't see this the country does . . . and public opinion will keep them straight'.[4] Balfour still, in fact, believed that it was in Germany's interest in China to 'throw herself into line with the United States and ourselves and play for the "Open Door" and equality of treatment as between all nations'.[5] But the main effect of the festivities at Kiel was upon the King. Always inclined to see diplomacy in personal terms, he carried away so good an impression of the Kaiser that he completely reversed his course and began to urge co-operation with Germany against Russia. When Russian ships were seizing British merchantmen in July he pressed upon Lansdowne that 'if we and Germany were to act together it would frighten Russia and besides be an opportunity for a useful "rapprochement" between England and Germany'. Lansdowne, however, advised that 'an overture of this kind [would be] undesirable' and that 'the German point of view probably differs from ours'.[6]

[1] Memo by Selborne, with note by Lansdowne, 26 Feb. 1904. A. Chamberlain MSS, Box AC 7, Package 5B.
[2] G.P. XIX–I.6038. [3] Ibid., 6041.
[4] Mallet to Bertie, 2 June 1904. Bertie MSS, Series A.
[5] Balfour to Clarke, 20 Sept. 1904. Balfour MSS, Add. MSS 49700.
[6] Lee, *King Edward VII*, vol. ii, p. 297. At this time Lansdowne seems to have felt

Even this slight improvement could not last. What brought it to an end was the circulation of rumours that Germany was drawing towards Russia. It was a natural German reply to the entente; and it was natural for Britain to feel threatened by it. The first reports of a Russo-German *rapprochement* had circulated in early 1904, and already by June the Japanese were anxious because of the King's visit to Kiel.[1] In the following months evidence accumulated. On 28 July a Russo-German commercial treaty was signed, giving rise to lively speculation at Berlin[2]; it was followed by negotiations for a German loan to Russia[3]; and on 14 September *The Times* published an alleged secret agreement between the two countries in the Far East.[4] The reports of such a *rapprochement* gained increasing credence in London. When in September Richthofen, the son of the German Foreign Minister, spoke indiscreetly in Cairo of a Russo-German alliance against the entente Powers, Lansdowne sent a report to Balfour, with the comment that 'it is difficult to believe that the ideas so lightheartedly developed by Richthofen junior are entirely his own'.[5] Clarke, one of Balfour's closest advisers on the Committeee of Imperial Defence, had already warned him of 'indications that there is a very close understanding between Russia and Germany'.[6] Such news tended to bind Britain more closely to France; and Hardinge, the new Ambassador to Russia, began to see himself as involved, with the French, in a competition with Germany for Russian friendship. 'It is as well not to let the Emperor feel that it is only the Emperor William who is taking any notice of him', he told Knollys.[7] Final proof that Germany was trying to ingratiate herself with Russia seemed to come from her sudden activity in Tibet, a region in

some distrust of the King's activities. When Edward proposed in August to send Prince Louis of Battenberg to represent him at the baptism of the Tsarevitch and to explain the British view in St Petersburg he at once sent a telegram to Balfour expressing his opposition. Prince Louis, he wrote, could speak only as a private person and then not on matters connected with the Japanese war. There were no points 'upon which it would be desirable to use this particular mode of expressing our views'; and he added: 'I do not think our diplomacy should be mixed up with that of H.M.' Memo by Lansdowne, 18 Aug. 1904. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xxiv, Lansdowne to Balfour, 19 Aug. 1904. Balfour MSS, Add. MSS 49728.

[1] B.D. IV.1–2.
[2] Lascelles to Lansdowne, 4 Aug. 1904. Lansdowne MSS. vol. xiii.
[3] Whitehead to Lansdowne, despatch No. 188, 29 July 1904. F.O. 64/1594.
[4] *The Times*, 14 Sept. 1904, p. 6.
[5] Lansdowne to Balfour, 17 Oct. 1904. Balfour MSS, Add. MSS 49728.
[6] Clarke to Balfour, 7 Sept. 1904. Ibid., Add. MSS 49700.
[7] Hardinge to Knollys, 24 Nov. 1904. Hardinge MSS, vol. vi.

which she could have no direct interest. On 16 October *The Times* published a report that Germany was working to prevent Chinese ratification of the Younghusband Treaty.[1] and although Richthofen denied it indignantly,[2] Satow described it as substantially true.[3] Lansdowne was so much irritated by the behaviour of the Germans in Tibet that, when he told Satow that he found their explanations unconvincing, he added that 'it is exactly what, knowing our Germans as we do, we may be perfectly sure that they would say upon such an occasion'.[4]

The Russo-German *rapprochement* was all the more alarming because the British were very slow to realise that Japan was winning the Far Eastern war. On 10–14 August the Russian fleet in Port Arthur made an attempt to escape but was thrown back with five of its six battleships seriously damaged,[5] and in late August and early September the Japanese won a great land victory at Liaoyang in Manchuria. Clarke concluded from these events that Russia's military position was now irretrievable and that the Japanese could win an engagement with the Russian Baltic Fleet if it was sent to eastern waters. Their performance was, he told Balfour, 'most remarkable'.[6] But Balfour and Lansdowne still underestimated their Japanese allies. 'I wish', wrote Balfour on 20 September, 'I could be as confident about the issue of the war as most military critics appear to be.' He was afraid that 'Japan, which had now landed every regular soldier it possesses upon the mainland may, in six or eight months' time, find itself in considerable difficulties'.[7] Lansdowne thought both sides were 'exhausted after the tremendous struggle [of Liaoyang]', and, he told Satow, he would be 'surprised if the Japanese bring off a big "coup" in the neighbourhood of Mukden'.[8]

If the result of the Far Eastern war was to be a stalemate, and still more if it was to be a Russian victory, an effective Russo-German understanding would be very dangerous for Britain. There was not even any certainty that France would not join the two

[1] G.P. XIX–II, p. 652.
[2] Lascelles to Lansdowne, 22 Oct. 1904. F.O. Print (Tibet), vol. 8510, No. 37.
[3] Satow to Lansdowne, 22 Oct. 1904. Ibid., No. 38.
[4] Lansdowne to Satow, 20 Dec. 1904. Lansdowne MSS, vol. v.
[5] Memo by Ottley, 15 Aug. 1904. Balfour MSS, Add. MSS 49700.
[6] Clarke to Balfour, 17 Sept., 23 Sept., and 24 Nov. 1904. Ibid.
[7] Balfour to Clarke, 20 Sept. 1904. Ibid.
[8] Lansdowne to Satow, 14 Sept. 1904. Lansdowne MSS, vol. v.

Powers. Clarke thought that she would if Russia could invoke the Alliance.[1] Monson, the retiring Ambassador in Paris, warned Lansdowne in December that 'there is no doubt that this country clings to the Russian Alliance; and will not stop short at war in facilitating her final victory', and that the entente would lose its influence in such an event.[2] The situation was especially hazardous because there was always a danger that Britain would be drawn into the war at the side of her ally Japan. One danger was that the Russians would, in spite of Lansdowne's warnings, attempt to pass the Straits; Hardinge declared in June that Lamsdorff was opposed to such an action, but that the Czar was capable of ordering it on impulse at any moment.[3] Another was that Russia would seek to involve China in the war. This had been forecast by Balfour as necessary if she was to derive substantial gains from it, and Satow's news in June that Russia was building up grievances against China therefore seemed ominous.[4] Yet another possibility was that Japan would invoke the Alliance against French or German coaling of the Russian Fleet; to avert this danger a sub-committee of the C.I.D. had decided in June that the *casus foederis* could not legitimately arise in such a case.[5] The greatest danger of all, of course, would come when the terms of peace had to be arranged—especially if Russia insisted upon exacting terms like those sketched out at about this time by Witte, which even the friendly Hardinge called a 'simple act of brigandage'.[6] Finally there was the fear, expressed by both Hardinge and Clarke, that Russia, humiliated by her defeats at the hands of Japan, would try to draw attention from them by plunging into war with Britain.[7] Hardinge believed that a war with Britain would be more popular in Russia than the war with Japan was.[8]

The reasons for avoiding war had meanwhile remained as pressing as ever. In April Austen Chamberlain had circulated to

[1] Clarke to Balfour, 20 July 1904. Balfour MSS, Add. MSS 49700.
[2] Monson to Lansdowne, 23 Dec. 1904. Lansdowne MSS, vol. x.
[3] Hardinge to Sanderson and Knollys, 9 June 1904. Hardinge MSS, vol. vi.
[4] Satow to Lansdowne, 2 June 1904. Lansdowne MSS, vol. iv; also Satow to Lansdowne, 8 Sept. 1904. Ibid., vol. v.
[5] Note by Clarke, 11 June 1904. Balfour MSS, Add. MSS 49700.
[6] B.D. IV.3.
[7] Clarke to Balfour, 4 June 1904. Balfour MSS, Add. MSS 49700. Hardinge to Lansdowne, 4 Aug., to Edward VII, 5 November, and to Lansdowne, 5 November 1904. Hardinge MSS, vol. vi.
[8] Hardinge to Sandars, 21 July 1904. Ibid.

his colleagues a memorandum insisting on the need for reductions in expenditure.

> In my opinion, they must be sought in both the Army and Navy Estimates. Neither alone will be sufficient; and however reluctant we may be to face the fact, the time has come when we must frankly admit that the financial resources of the U.K. are inadequate to do all that we should desire in the matter of Imperial Defence.[1]

It was at about this time, too, that the Chancellor issued a Treasury memorandum showing that British defence spending had in recent years increased by an amount far larger than in the case of any Continental Power.[2] And yet Lansdowne and Selborne had already declared that no reduction was possible.

Britain was driven still closer to France. Clarke concluded that 'we should, as far as possible, go hand in hand with France'[3] and even advised Balfour to tell her that Britain would not actively support Japan unless forced to do so.[4] Lansdowne himself consulted Cambon on all dangerous questions. He received favourably the Ambassador's proposals for the regulation of Anglo-French railway competition in China[5]; he conferred with him unofficially on the Russo-German *rapprochement*[6] and over Russian attacks on British shipping[7]; and he was in 'constant communication' with him during the Dogger Bank crisis.[8] As in 1903, Britain was driven towards France not directly by fear of Germany but by fear of Russia enhanced by the knowledge that German support could not be relied upon.

Lansdowne and Hardinge were also intent on avoiding a breach with Russia. If they were to succeed in this, it was essential to sustain the cautious and pacific Lamsdorff, a consideration that came to dominate their policy. 'My object', wrote Hardinge in September, 'is to nurse Lamsdorff as much as possible at the present moment so as to strengthen his hand'[9]; and Lansdowne agreed

[1] Memo by A. Chamberlain, 28 April 1904. A. Chamberlain MSS, Box AC 17, package 59.
[2] See p. 8.
[3] Clarke to Balfour, 19 July 1904. Balfour MSS, Add. MSS 49700.
[4] Clarke to Balfour, 21 July 1904. Ibid.
[5] Lansdowne to Monson, despatch No. 443, 10 Aug. 1904, and minute by Campbell. F.O. 27/3663.
[6] D.D.F. V.433; Lansdowne to Hardinge, 19 Oct. 1904. Hardinge MSS, vol. vii.
[7] D.D.F. V.281. [8] B.D. IV.21.
[9] Hardinge to Lansdowne, 15 Sept. 1904. Hardinge MSS, vol. vi.

that 'we ought . . . to avoid doing anything which might blacken Lamsdorff's face or increase the great difficulties with which he has to contend'.[1] Just after the Dogger Bank crisis he repeated to Hardinge that 'we are specially anxious not to embarrass Lamsdorff'.[2]

Lansdowne therefore insisted upon a conciliatory policy. The C.I.D. decided that French or German coaling would not involve the *casus foederis* of the Alliance[3]; that Britain could not object to the passage of the Straits by ships of the Russian 'Volunteer Fleet'[4]; and that the right of Russian cruisers to inspect British shipping in the Red Sea could not be contested.[5] This apparent weakness met with great scorn from public opinion[6]; but Hardinge and Lansdowne were not deterred. Hardinge continued to think that 'the more quietly we proceed the better',[7] and Lansdowne referred with contempt to 'hotheads who want us to bluster and bounce'.[8]

An immediate threat to Anglo-Russian relations lay in Tibet. The political mission had found no competent authority to negotiate with at Gyangtse, and in April Younghusband, its leader, had proposed a further advance to Lhasa itself.[9] He was supported both by Curzon, who spent the summer and autumn of 1904 in London, and by Ampthill, the acting Viceroy.[10] The Cabinet shrank from this course; Godley, the Permanent Under-Secretary, told Ampthill that they 'won't agree if they can possibly help it'.[11] But they found themselves the prisoners of their own reluctant decision of the previous November; as Brodrick explained to Ampthill, 'as we have gone so far we certainly cannot come back without some satisfaction'.[12] Reluctantly, and under pressure from Curzon's relentless eloquence, they agreed, on 12 May, to an advance to Lhasa if no competent negotiator had appeared within a month.

[1] Lansdowne to Balfour, 20 Sept. 1904. Balfour MSS, Add. MSS 49728.
[2] Lansdowne to Hardinge, 8 Nov. 1904. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xxv.
[3] See p. 167.
[4] Minutes of 46th meeting, 17 June 1904. Cab. 2/1. The 'Volunteer Fleet' was a squadron of ships nominally a part of Russia's mercantile marine but in fact under the orders of the Russian Navy. B.D. IV, p. 41, n.1.
[5] Minutes of 51st meeting, 27 July 1904. Cab. 2/1.
[6] Lansdowne to Hardinge, 24 Aug. 1904. Hardinge MSS, vol. vii.
[7] Hardinge to Lansdowne, 4 Aug. 1904. Hardinge MSS, vol. vi.
[8] Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 313.
[9] I.O. to F.O., 29 April. F.O. Print (Tibet), vol. 8415, No. 24.
[10] I.O. to F.O., 7 May 1904. Ibid., No. 32.
[11] Godley to Ampthill, 6 May 1904. Ampthill MSS, vol. xxxvii.
[12] Brodrick to Ampthill, 22 April 1904. Ibid.

The attitude of resentful weakness with which they finally gave way to Curzon is well shown in Brodrick's explanatory letter to Ampthill. 'We have authorized it because there is nothing else to do, but naturally not having been anxious for the expedition from the first we wish to give every loophole we can before actually going to Lhasa.'[1] They were however determined not to indulge Curzon's dreams of permanent control over Tibet, and, in spite of his protests, they insisted that Younghusband's instructions should forbid him to establish a Resident at Lhasa.[2] Although he could demand occupation of the Chumbi Valley while an indemnity was being paid, indemnity and repayment were not to last for more than three years.[3]

Younghusband disobeyed his instructions. On 7 September, after occupying Lhasa, he forced the Tibetans to accept an agreement by which the payment of an indemnity, and consequently the occupation of the Chumbi Valley, was to last for seventy-five years.[4] A separate agreement gave the British Trade Agent at Gyangtse the right of access to Lhasa.[5] This news produced anger and dismay in the government. Hardinge pressed upon Lansdowne the 'transcendental importance of adhering to the very strictest interpretation of our assurances to the Russian government',[6] and his advice was reinforced by expressions of concern on the part of the Russians, the Germans, and even the Americans.[7] Lansdowne himself was indignant, told Hardinge that 'we are placed in a very embarrassing position', and declared that although British interests in Tibet must be protected the seventy-five year occupation of the Chumbi was 'quite inadmissible and none of us here would listen to it'.[8] Balfour's reaction was especially strong. He believed that Younghusband 'has not merely been disobedient but by his disobedience has touched the honour of his country'. No attempt should be made to stand by him, for 'such an attempt will only end in our sharing the discredit which must attach to his conduct'.[9]

[1] Brodrick to Ampthill, 13 May 1904. Ibid.
[2] Peter Fleming, *Bayonets to Lhasa*, pp. 210–15.
[3] Ibid. I.O. to F.O., 27 July 1904. F.O. Print (Tibet), vol. 8509, No. 29. The Chumbi Valley was a strip of Tibet extending into British-protected territory in India.
[4] I.O. to F.O., 12 Sept. 1904. F.O. Print (Tibet), vol. 8509, No. 82.
[5] I.O. to F.O., 24 Oct. 1904. F.O. Print (Tibet), vol. 8510, No. 43.
[6] Hardinge to Lansdowne, 27 Sept. 1904. Hardinge MSS, vol. vi.
[7] B.D. IV.297, 299, 301. Lansdowne to Satow, 14 Sept. 1904. Lansdowne MSS, vol. v.
[8] Lansdowne to Hardinge, 4 Oct. 1904. Hardinge MSS, vol. vii.
[9] Balfour to Lansdowne, 4 Oct. 1904. Balfour MSS, Add. MSS 49729.

To Knollys Balfour explained that the only chance of a permanent arrangement with Russia in Central Asia depended upon a mutual confidence that engagements would be kept; and this confidence Younghusband had now undermined.[1]

The Cabinet therefore decided to throw over the Younghusband Treaty. Lansdowne told Benckendorff on 5 October that 'its terms were still subject to revision',[2] and an official announcement was made to this effect on the following day.[3] When the convention was ratified by the Viceroy on 11 November there was added to it a declaration reducing the indemnity to a third of the amount fixed by Younghusband and providing for the evacuation of the Chumbi Valley after only three years.[4] At the same time the subsidiary agreement giving the Trade Agent at Gyangtse the right of access to Lhasa was rejected as 'unnecessary and inconsistent with the principles on which their policy [i.e. that of H.M.G.] has throughout been based'.[5]

The Imperial Government had at last asserted its authority over the Indian; but the incident only increased the bad feeling between the Cabinet and the Viceroy. Brodrick knew that Curzon had been corresponding, not only with Younghusband, but also, 'most improperly', with the King to obtain the acceptance of his policy.[6] Balfour too complained that the Viceroy had been 'constantly corresponding, behind our backs, with Younghusband and, in my belief, endeavouring to upset the Tibetan policy of the government'. He now hoped that Curzon would give up his post in April, and quoted with approval a verdict by Hamilton that Curzon 'would never work any plan but one that he himself had originated'.[7]

But the greatest crisis was still to come. Early October was a time of great anxiety: the first convincing reports of a Russo-German understanding were coming in; and the Orenburg-Tashkent Railway, the threat of which had dominated Indian military

[1] Balfour to Knollys, 6 Oct. 1904. Ibid., Add. MSS 49684.
[2] Lansdowne to Hardinge, 5 Oct. 1904. F.O. Print (Tibet), vol. 8510, No. 13.
[3] Lansdowne to Satow, 6 Oct. 1904. Ibid., No. 14.
[4] Enclosure in I.O. to F.O. Ibid., No. 85. B.D. IV, p. 317.
[5] I.O. to F.O., 14 Nov. 1904. F.O. Print (Tibet), vol. 8510, No. 64.
[6] Brodrick to Salisbury, 15 Sept. 1904. Balfour MSS, Add. MSS 49757. Balfour in moving Brodrick from the War Office to the India Office in 1903 had told Devonshire that he was '*persona ingratissima*' with the King. Balfour to Devonshire, 26 Sept. 1903. Devonshire MSS 340–2973.
[7] Balfour to Lady Salisbury, 4 Oct. 1904. Balfour MSS, Add. MSS 49757.

planning for some years, was at last substantially completed.[1] 'The more I consider the matter', wrote Lansdowne on the 19th, 'the more I am impressed with the obscurity of the outlook.'[2] Then, on the 23rd, news arrived in London that the Russian Baltic Fleet, which had just set out for the Far East, had fired on the Hull fishing fleet on its journey through the North Sea. Two ships had been sunk and several lives lost.[3] There was an immediate explosion of public opinion. Chirol, the Foreign Editor of *The Times*, told Hardinge that 'the feeling in this country is such that no government can trifle with'.[4] The Balfour government, nearing the end of its term and only just clinging to office, was particularly vulnerable to pressure of this sort. Both R. P. Maxwell, a Senior Clerk in the Foreign Office, and Knollys told Hardinge that the Cabinet was influenced by it[5]; and Lansdowne himself wrote that 'the political situation here is also not free from difficulty and any sign of weakness on our part might endanger prospects of peace now and in any future complications which may arise between the two Powers'.[6]

But the Cabinet were not simply unwilling victims of popular pressure. Instinctively, and in spite of the political disadvantages, the majority of them shared the general hostility to Russia and were prepared to go to war with her. They had supported Lansdowne's search for an entente, not through friendship for her, but through fear of her. The resentments accumulated over the years now produced an impulsive burst of truculence. Knollys told Hardinge that 'at one moment they were rather warlike' and that Selborne was the most belligerent of all.[7] Most significant was the fact that two Ministers who normally took no interest in foreign affairs also intervened. Gerald Balfour, the Prime Minister's

[1] On 8 October Hardinge reported that the new Governor-General of Turkestan had been the first to travel by it, arriving at Tashkent in a through train from St Petersburg. Hardinge to Lansdowne, despatch No. 501, 8 Oct. 1904. F.O. 65/1681.

[2] Lansdowne to Hardinge, 19 Oct. 1904. Hardinge MSS, vol. vii.

[3] B.D. IV.5.

[4] Chirol to Hardinge, 1 Nov. 1904. Hardinge MSS, vol. vii.

[5] Maxwell to Hardinge, 28 Nov. 1904; Knollys to Hardinge, 15 Nov. 1904. Hardinge MSS, vol. vii.

[6] Lansdowne to Hardinge, telegram, 14 Nov. 1904. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xxv.

[7] Knollys to Hardinge, 15 Nov. 1904. Hardinge MSS, vol. vii. Selborne had already urged strong measures against the Russian cruisers (Selborne to Balfour, 28 Aug. 1904. Balfour MSS, Add. MSS 49708). He now impressed upon Balfour that, if action was to be taken it must be immediate. 'Tell Beresford to do it and he will do it' (Selborne to Balfour, 2 Nov. 1904. Ibid.).

brother and President of the Board of Trade, telegraphed that the government should not be content with the promise of a future inquiry and that if the Russians would not stop their fleet themselves, then the British should[1]; and Walter Long, the President of the Local Government Board, was so impressed by the force of public feeling that he wanted a plain warning to Russia that 'repetition would mean immediate action'.[2] Balfour's leading professional advisers were also belligerent. Fisher, who had just become First Sea Lord, thought the opportunity a good one for an attack on a Russian fleet which was 'ours whenever we like to take it'[3]; and Clarke also, although he became more cautious later, advised that the Russian fleet should not be allowed to proceed and that the danger of stopping it was small.[4] Balfour himself was due to make a major speech at Southampton on the 28th, and decided two days previously that the Russians must be required to give satisfaction before that date. If they had not agreed by then to stop the fleet and take off those guilty of the attack, he would publicly announce that Britain could not allow the fleet to proceed. He did not shrink from the implications of this. It brought the country 'perilously near to overt hostilities', but no other course was consistent with 'our national honour or with the fixed sentiments of the country'.[5]

On the other hand, there were forces making for peace. According to Knollys, the King was one of these. '[His] object all along has been to act rather as a drag on the government as he was afraid they were inclined to go ahead too fast.'[6] It is, however, more likely that he was at first for strong measures and only became cooler later. This was Chirol's version,[7] and it is supported by other evidence.[8] But there can be no doubt that Hardinge, whose main concern was with Germany, throughout exerted himself to prevent a break. He told Bertie at the height of the crisis that war

[1] Telegram from Gerald Balfour, undated. Balfour MSS, Add. MSS 49831.
[2] Long to Balfour, 1 Nov. 1904. Balfour MSS, Add. MSS 49776.
[3] Marder, *Fear God and Dread Nought*, vol. ii, pp. 47–8.
[4] Clarke to Balfour, 27 Oct., and to Sandars 28 Oct. 1904. By 2 November, to Balfour, he was more conciliatory. Balfour MSS, Add. MSS 49700.
[5] Dugdale, *Balfour*, vol. i, pp. 384–5.
[6] Knollys to Hardinge, 15 Nov. 1904. Hardinge MSS, vol. vii.
[7] Chirol to Hardinge, 1 Nov. 1904. Ibid.
[8] Lee, *King Edward VII*, vol. ii, p. 302. On the 25th Edward wrote to Lansdowne that 'mere apologies to us will not suffice. *Some* punishment *must* be meted out to the Russian officers.' On the 28th, however, he was telling the same correspondent that it would be difficult to insist on punishment.

would be a 'general calamity' and 'to the sole advantage of Germany'.[1] It was probably the truth, therefore, when he told Knollys after the crisis that he had been throughout determined to avoid war.[2] He was supported by Bertie (then in London between his Embassies in Rome and Paris), who attributed the Russian attack to warnings from the Kaiser about Japanese activity in the North Sea.[3]

But of course, with the Cabinet so belligerent, all depended on Lansdowne. Chirol told Hardinge that 'your chief kept a very cool head; in fact at first he seemed to me to go too far in the direction of minimising the whole business'.[4] His anxiety to avoid war appears in the letter he wrote to Hardinge after the crisis. 'We have got the Russians out of the scrape this time—but nothing that you or I, or Lamsdorff or Benckendorff, can do will get them out of a second scrape.'[5] He therefore recommended Hardinge's conciliatory views to Balfour[6] and kept in close contact with Cambon.[7] Lansdowne appeared at his best in the crisis, exhibiting his characteristic qualities of coolness and detachment.

In spite of these pacific influences, war came very near, nearer than it had between Britain and Russia for a quarter of a century. Lansdowne told Hardinge on the 29th that 'on Thursday evening [the 27th] it looked to me as if the betting was about even as between peace and war'.[8] A powerful fleet was concentrated at Gibraltar, and its commander warned that he might have to stop the Russians by force.[9] Meanwhile Lansdowne put strong pressure on Benckendorff to provide the assurances required by Balfour. It was only after some hesitation that Benckendorff gave them, on the afternoon of the 28th, a few hours before the Prime Minister was to speak at Southampton.[10] Balfour could not be told until he reached Southampton, and his biographer describes the dramatic circumstances of the journey made in ignorance of whether the Russian reply meant peace or war, and of his arrival at Southamp-

[1] Hardinge to Bertie (seen by Lansdowne), 27 Oct. 1904. Bertie MSS, Series A.
[2] Hardinge to Knollys, 24 Nov. 1904. Hardinge MSS, vol. vi.
[3] Bertie to Hardinge, 28 Nov. 1904. Ibid., vol. vii.
[4] Chirol to Hardinge, 1 Nov. 1904. Ibid.
[5] Lansdowne to Hardinge, 29 Oct. 1904. Ibid.
[6] Lansdowne to Balfour, 8 Nov. 1904. Balfour MSS, Add. MSS 49729.
[7] D.D.F. V.449. Cambon, *Correspondance*, vol. ii, pp. 168–9.
[8] Lansdowne to Hardinge, 29 Oct. 1904. Hardinge MSS, vol. vii.
[9] B.D. IV.19.
[10] B.D. IV.20.

ton to be met by the telegram with Benckendorff's answer.[1] It was by such a narrow margin as this that war was avoided.

But it had been avoided; and it soon became plain that the supreme crisis of the war had been surmounted. The Baltic Fleet continued on its way, creating international tension whenever it came near land; but the entire situation was soon transformed by the course of the war in the Far East. Early in the year the Japanese had surrounded Port Arthur, cutting it off from the main Russian armies in Manchuria, and had since then kept it under constant siege. Since it was the only port in the Far East to which the Baltic Fleet could safely go all depended on whether it would fall before the new fleet could reach it. It was defended with great stubbornness, and at the end of November, with the Russians steaming past West Africa, the Japanese Army was ordered to take it, no matter at what cost.[2] This, after a series of assaults involving heavy losses, they were at last able to accomplish on 2 January 1905. Clarke described this as a 'magnificent achievement', and believed that the Baltic Fleet, without a base in Chinese waters, might now turn back. He also estimated that the Japanese would now be able to transfer 50,000 troops of the best quality to Manchuria.[3] Clearly the Japanese were now winning the war; and at about the same time the internal discontent in Russia at last burst into the open. The Czar was forced to promise reforms on 28 December, but could not allay the discontent which, fomented by 'Bloody Sunday' on 22 January, grew until it reached the dimensions of a revolution. The situation in the Far Eastern war had, in a few months, changed beyond recognition; and in turn the change produced a decisive shift in the balance of power and transformed the international scene.

4

At the end of 1904 Anglo-German relations reached their lowest point ever. Articles in *Vanity Fair* and the *Army and Navy Gazette* were read by Germans (and not without justification) as advocating a British *coup* against the German Fleet before it became too large; and when these were followed, in December, by a reorganisation of the British Navy concentrating its strength in the North

[1] Dugdale, *Balfour*, vol. ii, p. 385.
[2] MacDonald to Lansdowne, despatch No. 335, 23 Nov. 1904. F.O. 46/579.
[3] Clarke to Balfour, 2 Jan. 1905. Add. MSS 49701.

Sea, there was a brief period of panic in Germany when an attack was believed to be imminent. Fisher, who had just become First Sea Lord, did in fact speak of 'Copenhagening' the German Navy[1]; and his reorganisation, strengthening the Navy at home and reducing it in the Mediterranean, was inspired by his conviction that it was from Germany that the real threat came. But of course the Cabinet never seriously considered an attack on Germany. 'I really do not believe', wrote Lansdowne on 27 December, 'that it would be possible to find a sane individual in these islands who thinks that it would be for our interest, or was likely to become our duty, to fasten a quarrel upon Germany.'[2] Even though the panic proved to be unfounded it produced a still further deterioration in Anglo-German relations. Both sides indulged in bitter recriminations, in the press and even officially. Lascelles reported on 23 December that the Kaiser was now very anti-English,[3] and he later had conversations of some acerbity with Bülow and Holstein.[4] A permanent feeling of suspicion settled upon both countries. Even Lansdowne asked Lascelles: 'Are they perchance meditating [a *coup*] against us and are they seeking to justify it in advance? All this talk about our driving them to lean towards Russia looks a little like it.'[5] Balfour suspected that extensive German naval manoeuvres off the Shetlands in December had some ulterior purpose. 'I cannot help feeling suspicion', he told Clarke on the 10th, 'that their manoeuvres are not merely manoeuvres in the abstract, but have some more immediate relation to warlike operations contemplated in those waters.'[6] Suspicion on the German side was strengthened also when on 3 February Lee, the Civil Lord of the Admiralty, made a speech in which he dwelt on the power of the Navy to meet, and perhaps anticipate, an attack, from whatever quarter it might come.

The crisis produced an interesting discussion inside the Cabinet.

[1] Marder, *Fear God and Dread Nought*, vol. ii, p. 20. This is confirmed by a letter from Selborne to Balfour. 'Fisher's intellectual flaws are on the same great scale as his intellectual virtues. I told you his proposal about the German fleet at Kiel—it was no love of paradox nor said to shock—He meant it.' Selborne to Balfour, 26 Nov. 1904. Balfour MSS, Add. MS 49708.

[2] Lansdowne to Lascelles, 27 Dec. 1904. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xiii.

[3] Lascelles to Lansdowne, 23 Dec. 1904. Ibid.

[4] B.D. III.65(a) and (b).

[5] Lansdowne to Lascelles, 5 Jan. 1905. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xiv.

[6] Balfour to Clarke, 10 Dec. 1904, F.O. 64/1630. Clarke replied that this could indeed be the case, although it would be of little benefit to the Germans. Clarke to Balfour, 31 Dec. 1904. F.O. 64/1608.

This was provoked by Lascelles's reports of his interviews with Bülow and Holstein on 24 and 26 December. Bülow and Lascelles agreed that neither country offered a real threat to the other at sea, but Bülow threatened that if Anglo-German friendship was made impossible, 'he would be compelled by the force of circumstances to lean towards Russia'.[1] Holstein did not make this threat, but he spoke rather more sharply about the possibility of war than the Chancellor had done.[2] The language of the two Germans, and Lascelles's reaction to it, produced an indignant outburst from Austen Chamberlain. Chamberlain, who had plainly inherited his father's anti-German sentiments, wanted a much stronger line taken with the Germans. He protested on 14 January that Lascelles had listened 'without serious remonstrance' to what had been 'scarcely veiled threats' from Bülow. This course Chamberlain considered to be 'scarcely compatible with the dignity of the country he represents'. He then launched into a full-scale denunciation of Germany.

> I think it is time that we spoke with equal frankness. When has German diplomacy ever done otherwise than 'lean to Russia'? In what question, where the interests of England and Russia conflict, have we had, or can we ever expect, the support of German diplomacy? The truth is that German policy is governed by a besetting fear of their great Eastern neighbour: and I am not aware that Germany has ever made any attempt to cultivate even the appearance of good relations with England except for the purpose of making a better bargain with some Third Power!
>
> Whatever Count Bülow may say, her navy is a standing menace to this country. It has been openly recommended to German patriotism in the German Press for this reason. . . . [The German government was silent] when the whole German Press, official and unofficial, in Germany and elsewhere wherever inspiration is sought or obtained from Berlin, was daily attacking England and all things English with a vehemence and scurrility which have no parallel even in our least important journals.[3]

Chamberlain's excited view was not shared by the heads of the Foreign Office. Sanderson was by now quite out of sympathy with the Germanophobia so prevalent among his subordinates and in the press. He had already told Lascelles that 'I wish we could

[1] B.D. III.65(a). [2] B.D. III.65(b).
[3] Memo by A. Chamberlain, 14 Jan. 1905. A. Chamberlain MSS. Box AC 17, Package 58.

make the lunatics here who denounce Germany in such unmeasured terms and howl for an agreement with Russia understand that the natural effect is to drive Germany into the Russian camp and encourage the Russians to believe that they can get all they want at our expense and without coming to any agreement with us'.[1] Sanderson had no wish to replace diplomacy by emotion and had a remarkable capacity for understanding German problems. To Lansdowne he addressed an extremely sympathetic defence of their policy. He contended that the effect of a hostile press campaign was naturally underestimated in Britain, where the press was not read with as much attention as it was abroad. He doubted whether, on the subject of the German Navy, 'sufficient allowance is generally made for the difficulties of the German government'. Since 1870 the Germans had developed an extensive commerce and acquired a colonial empire and 'their naval inferiority is therefore now a serious matter not to be ignored'. Their diplomatic position was very weak.

They are confronted with a Russo-French alliance; the Triple Alliance is less effective than it was: Austria is weaker from internal dissensions and is working with Russia in the Balkans; Italy from financial and other reasons has made friends with France and we have followed suit. It is true that France shows no sign of an aggressive disposition but she has obstinately refused to be reconciled to her loss of territory.

It would be a bad policy on the part of Germany to make any public admission of this unpleasant fact and just as the Egyptian question was always dragged to the front in Paris when there was danger of an acute question between France and Germany so the possible antagonism of Great Britain is a very convenient pretext for the increase of the German Fleet. But it seems to me that quite irrespective of colonial ambitions Germany must feel it necessary to increase her navy and that unless she can feel sure that we will not at some untoward moment throw ourselves on the side of France she must as a matter of precaution cultivate the goodwill of Russia far more than it is convenient for her to do. It is only natural that she should let us know this and endeavour to keep our friendship on terms as easy to herself as possible. But I do not see that we can reasonably resent this, and as a matter of fact a certain amount of friendship with Germany would be valuable for us in any bargaining with Russia.[2]

[1] Sanderson to Lascelles, 3 Jan. 1905. Lascelles MSS, vol. iii, Part 4.
[2] Sanderson to Lansdowne, 20 Jan. 1905. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xxix.

Lansdowne never favoured general analyses of policy of the sort here put forward by Chamberlain and Sanderson. But it was typical of him that his sympathies should be with Sanderson's unemotional approach to relations with Germany. He defended Lascelles against Chamberlain's attack. 'He is never addicted to the use of strong language, and perhaps it would be better if he were sometimes a little more emphatic; but he has, I think, upon the whole held his own well, and obtained a position of considerable influence with the extraordinary personage to whom he is accredited.' On the larger problem, he commented:

> As to our Press, I think its tone was for some time quite needlessly exasperating, and it is impossible to get out of the heads of foreigners the idea that we can, if we like, influence its utterances. . . . It is, of course, irritating to find serious diplomatic complaints founded upon articles in the 'Army and Navy Gazette' and 'Vanity Fair' but foreigners, so far as I am able to judge, are all alike in their inability to distinguish between the importance of one British journal and another.
>
> The Germans have no doubt behaved shabbily to us upon a good many occasions, but it is not quite true to say that they have never made any attempt to cultivate good relations with us. They have generally supported us in Egypt and you [Balfour] will remember that, at the time when Hatzfeldt left the German Embassy and Eckardstein was in command, a most energetic attempt was made to induce us to enter into closer relations with them. I am also bound to say that during the Venezuelan affair the Germans upon the whole ran straight so far as we were concerned. You will gather from these remarks that I am less inclined than Austen to take 'au grand sérieux' the observations of the two German statesmen. In neither case have we to deal with official representations on behalf of the German Government.[1]

Lansdowne, refused, therefore, to take the growing Anglo-German rivalry too seriously. Even as he wrote Japanese victories in the Far East were fortifying him in this attitude by giving Britain a new confidence and ease of movement. It was true that the danger of a Continental intervention to help Russia could still not be discounted; but Lansdowne's suspicions were directed as much against France as against Germany. He thought it 'far from improbable that the French Government might have been discussing, if not with Russia, perhaps with Germany, what con-

[1] Lansdowne to Balfour, 18 Jan. 1905. Balfour MSS, Add. MSS 49729.

ditions of peace might in various contingencies be accepted by the Powers',[1] and began to inquire about the possibility of a Franco-German intervention when the time came to discuss the terms of peace.[2] Any anxiety he still felt about the Far East was, therefore, founded upon distrust of France as well as of Germany, and he took no action on an overture from Delcassé for an Anglo-Russian *rapprochement* developing eventually into an Anglo-Franco-Russo-Italian combination to keep Germany in check.[3] A suggestion from Bertie, now Ambassador in Paris, that Britain could enlist the help of France by offering her a guarantee of her Indo-Chinese possessions was also allowed to drop.[4]

On the whole, the British now had a confidence about the future of the Far East which they had not felt for many years. It was at about this time that they agreed to take a decisive step—the renewal of the Japanese Alliance. The idea seems to have originated with Percy, Lansdowne's Under-Secretary, who suggested in a letter to Balfour on 13 January that the government should at once renew the Alliance for five years to ensure its continuance after their departure. He added that 'we might at the same time invite America to join'.[5] He had also previously recommended the immediate renewal of the Alliance to Lansdowne, who himself wrote to Balfour on 16 January to say that he was inclined to favour the idea.[6] Balfour at first had constitutional scruples, doubting the propriety of committing his successors in this way; he admitted, however, that 'if . . . we could bring in the Americans that would be a new arrangement and, as part of it, an extension of the Japanese Treaty would clearly be legitimate'.[7] And indeed in January 1905 a real prospect appeared of that support from the United States which Balfour and Lansdowne had been hoping for during the past two years. In November Roosevelt was triumphantly re-elected and became free to take decisive action. The first good sign was the re-appointment of the Anglophile Hay as Secretary of State. Then, in January, Spring-Rice, who was a personal friend of the President's, received from him a letter

[1] Lansdowne to Bertie, 19 Jan. 1905. Lansdowne MSS, vol. x.
[2] Mallet to Bertie, 17 Jan. 1905. Bertie MSS, Series A.
[3] Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, pp. 339–40.
[4] Bertie to Lansdowne, 17 Jan. 1905. Lansdowne MSS, vol. x.
[5] Percy to Balfour, 13 January 1905. Balfour MSS, Add. MSS 49747.
[6] Lansdowne to Balfour, 16 January 1905. Ibid., Add. MSS 49729.
[7] Balfour to Percy, 15 January 1905. Ibid., Add. MSS 49747.

which, according to Gerald Balfour, seemed 'to suggest a proposal for joint action at the end of the war in connection with possible terms of peace'.[1] The Prime Minister at once seized his opportunity. He drew up a letter for Spring-Rice which contained a sweeping proposal for an alliance between the two countries to prevent aggression on China. He also suggested that they might 'consider what terms they would regard as inimical to their interests, and how they can best prevent Russia indemnifying herself for the moral and material cost of the war by appropriating a large slice of Chinese territory'.[2] Lansdowne, concurring, expressed the opinion that Roosevelt 'would co-operate with us in defending Japan against a blow at her vitals'.[3]

Probably this remarkable letter was never sent. On the 23rd Roosevelt approached Durand, the Ambassador; and Lansdowne, who confessed to feeling 'a little uneasy at the proposed extra-official communications between the President and Spring-Rice', was relieved to be able to work through the regular channels.[4] Roosevelt assured Durand that their two countries must 'stand together' and that in particular they must co-operate to see the adoption of a reasonable peace settlement. He unfolded his ideas of what such a settlement should be: Japan should keep Port Arthur and Korea, and Russia north Manchuria, while the rest of Manchuria should revert to China. If the neutrals tried to intervene against Japan, then, promised Roosevelt, 'I will oppose any attempt of the kind'.[5] Balfour and Lansdowne at once drew up a reply, more cautious than Balfour's original letter to Spring-Rice but with the same large implications. They stated that 'we earnestly desire to remain in line with the United States and we believe that in certain eventualities concerted action between us might have the best results'. They accepted the terms of peace outlined by Roosevelt: Japan could fairly insist on keeping Port Arthur and Korea, and Britain would be 'ready to join the United States in opposing attempts by neutral Powers to coerce her into abandonment of either of these interests'.[6]

Meanwhile MacDonald had been instructed to ask the Japanese

[1] Sir Cecil Spring-Rice, *Letters and Friendships*, ed. S. Gwynn, vol. i, p. 449.
[2] Dugdale, *Balfour*, vol. i, pp. 386–8.
[3] Lansdowne to Balfour, 18 Jan. 1905. Balfour MSS, Add. MSS 49729.
[4] Lansdowne to Balfour, 23 Jan. 1905. Ibid.
[5] Durand to Lansdowne, 23 Jan. and 26 Jan. 1905. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xxxii.
[6] Lansdowne to Durand, 25 Jan. 1905. Ibid., vol. xxviii.

unofficially if they were willing to reveal the terms upon which they would make peace.[1] Komura's reply, sent on the 25th, was exactly what Lansdowne would have wished. Japan would insist on the retention of Port Arthur and Korea and on the return of Manchuria to Chinese administration, but she was willing to allow Russia to keep the Siberian railway from the Russian frontier through Harbin to Vladivostok.[2] These terms, even to the retention of some Russian influence in north Manchuria, were the same as those upon which London and Washington had agreed. Lansdowne could therefore, in communicating them to Durand on the 28th, state with confidence that they did not seem to Britain to be excessive.[3] Roosevelt agreed and repeated his desire for Anglo-American co-operation.

> As long as he remained at the head of affairs in America it was his desire and intention that the United States Government should keep in closest touch with H.M.G. and . . . he considered the interests of the two countries to be identical in the Far East. He is, however, anxious that our views should be kept entirely to ourselves, and that there should be no open evident agreement, so as to avoid exciting alarm and criticism. He added that the two countries must stand together, but that in order to avoid raising unnecessary difficulties they should show it by their actions only.[4]

Lansdowne regarded these promises as sufficient. He told Satow in February that 'the United States government is I think quite inclined to work with us in the Far East. They will endeavour to avoid the appearance of running in double harness with us, but I think they will pull in the same direction'.[5] The two countries continued to maintain close contact. In February Spring-Rice visited Washington and was again told that, although there could be no definite understanding, they should work together and keep each other fully informed of all that passed.[6]

An unofficial Anglo-American-Japanese accord had been established in the Far East and had now to be consolidated by a renewal of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. It was no longer possible, as Balfour had hoped, to make it wait upon the participation of America, and the Prime Minister's doubts were forgotten. Two

[1] Lansdowne to MacDonald, 24 Jan. 1905. Ibid., vol. xviii.
[2] MacDonald to Lansdowne, 25 Jan. 1905. Ibid.
[3] Lansdowne to Durand, 28 Jan. 1905. Ibid., vol. xxxii.
[4] Durand to Lansdowne, 30 Jan. 1905. Ibid.
[5] Lansdowne to Satow, 21 Feb. 1905. Ibid., vol. v.
[6] Memo by Spring-Rice, Feb. 1905. Ibid., vol. xxxii.

circumstances were making an approach to Japan a matter of urgency. The first was the weakness of the government. It had already shown considerable tenacity in office, but its fall could not be long delayed, and it was regarded as essential to negotiate a new alliance before this happened. This consideration became more and more important as the year wore on; but already in January Sandars had advised Lansdowne to 'consider his diplomatic work from this aspect'.[1] The second reason for urgency was that the other Powers were courting the unexpectedly powerful Japan. Even the old fears of a Russo-Japanese bargain to the exclusion of Britain had not been entirely dispelled by the war: in July 1904 and again in December Hardinge warned of the danger that Japan would be persuaded to enter a Russo-German system.[2] MacDonald shared Hardinge's anxiety. He told Lansdowne on 2 February that 'the moment when we can be of the greatest use to them [the Japanese], the moment when they will definitely decide whether they will go in with us in the Far East of the future or come to an arrangement with the Russians, will be during the peace negotiations'.[3] Finally, any lingering doubts about the ability of the Japanese to beat Russia were dispelled when at the end of February they won their greatest military victory of the war. For three weeks a fierce battle was fought around Mukden, and it resulted in the complete defeat of the Russians. On 10 March the Japanese entered the city. 'It looks like the beginning of the end', wrote MacDonald.[4] Only a few days previously the Czar had been forced to give way to revolutionary demands and announce his intention to convoke a representative assembly.

Britain's international position had been transformed. Her ally Japan was inflicting a series of crushing defeats on Russia, the foe she had most dreaded; and if France and Germany intervened to aid Russia it was likely that the United States would come to the support of Britain and Japan. None of this had been foreseen in 1903; the British government had stumbled upon a solution to the Far Eastern question, the most dangerous threat to the Empire for many years. The importance of this was that it made isolation

[1] Sandars to Balfour, 23 Jan. 1905. Balfour MSS, Add. MSS 49763.
[2] Hardinge to Sandars, 21 July 1904. Hardinge MSS, vol. vi. Hardinge to Lansdowne, despatch No. 651, 2 Dec. 1904. F.O. 65/1682.
[3] MacDonald to Lansdowne, 2 Feb. 1905. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xviii.
[4] MacDonald to Campbell, 15 March 1905. F.O. 46/591.

from Europe possible once again. The French entente, formed primarily to prevent a general war arising out of the Far East, had lost its main *raison d'être*. Evidence of the divergence between British and French interests was soon to come. Immediately after the battle of Mukden there was talk of an arranged peace between Russia and Japan. Roosevelt understood that the Japanese had asked him to mediate,[1] but on inquiry at Tokyo it was found that he was mistaken,[2] and the affair came to nothing. Roosevelt gave no sign of offence, and on 19 March again impressed upon Durand that 'he would act in concert with H.M.G. in opposing the exercise of any pressure with a view to abating the Japanese terms of peace, which he entirely agreed with us in considering to be of a reasonable character'.[3] Lansdowne decided that mediation was out of the question.[4] It was easy for him to accept the continuance of the war, but for France every day that the war continued brought increased anxiety. Successive Japanese victories, by destroying Russia's ability to act as a counterpoise to Germany in Europe, were steadily undermining the Continental balance of power. Delcassé watched the process with increasing dismay, until by March, with the Russian Army shattered at Mukden, and the Russian government in disintegration, he was forced into action. On the 15th he appealed to the British. It was, he told Bertie, 'to the interest of England as well as of France that Russia should remain a Great European Power and consequently that the war should terminate. Otherwise, another State might become too powerful.' He hoped that Britain would communicate the Japanese terms to him for transmission to St Petersburg.[5]

The British were unmoved by Delcassé's appeal. They did not even inform him of their own simultaneous negotiations with Tokyo and Washington. Lansdowne told Bertie that Britain could not risk offending Japanese public opinion,[6] and Bertie told Delcassé that 'as neither of the two combatants appeared to be willing to take the first step towards peace it would be useless for the present to do anything in the matter'.[7] The government had no

[1] Durand to Lansdowne, 14 March 1906. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xxxii.
[2] MacDonald to Lansdowne, telegram No. 72, 26 March 1905. F.O. 46/595.
[3] Durand to Lansdowne, 19 March 1905. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xxxii.
[4] Lansdowne to Durand, 31 March 1905. Ibid., vol. xxviii.
[5] Bertie to Lansdowne, despatch No. 100A, 15 March 1905. F.O. 27/3705.
[6] Lansdowne to Bertie, 21 March 1905. Lansdowne MSS, vol. x.
[7] Bertie to Lansdowne, despatch No. 102A, 22 March 1905. F.O. 27/3705.

thought for the European consequences of Russia's defeats, and had attention only for the imperial benefits they would bring. Balfour in January had declared explicitly that 'from a narrowly national point of view, the balance of advantage, I suspect, is on the side of continued hostilities'.[1] Brodrick, too, in applauding the Mukden victory, said that it 'makes one begin to hope that another six or nine months may exhaust Russia to a degree which will render her innocuous to us for many years to come'.[2] Finally, a few days after Delcassé had made his unsuccessful overture, Lansdowne approached Japan for a renewal of the Alliance. On the 24th he told Hayashi that, although it was 'perhaps unusual' to anticipate the date set in the treaty for a discussion of its renewal, he felt that immediate consideration was justified by 'the exceptional circumstances of the present case'. He proposed directly that the Alliance should be renewed and hinted that it should also be extended in scope.[3] American approval set the seal upon the success of British diplomacy. In accordance with the agreement between the two countries that they should treat each other with full confidence, Lansdowne had communicated his decision to Roosevelt,[4] who had replied that he regarded it with 'great satisfaction'.[5] By the end of March, all Britain's gravest diplomatic problems seemed to be within sight of a solution.

But she was not to escape from the consequences of the entente so easily. As Hardinge and Bertie had seen, it also had European significance. The Germans, mistakenly perhaps but no doubt naturally, had taken it as a threat to themselves; and their estimate of it had been confirmed by such incidents as the press warfare and invasion scare at the end of 1904. Lansdowne had not intended that it should have this meaning; but he could not control all the consequences of the entente and he could not dissipate the atmosphere of suspicion and fear in which it came to appear as an anti-German instrument. The Germans decided that it must be challenged, and challenged in Morocco, where it was made. On 31 March the Kaiser landed in Tangiers and initiated the first Moroccan crisis.

[1] Balfour to Lansdowne, 24 Jan. 1905. Balfour MSS, Add. MSS 49729.
[2] Brodrick to Ampthill, 17 March 1905. Ampthill MSS, vol. xi.
[3] B.D. IV.111.
[4] Lansdowne to Durand, telegram No. 22, 16 March 1905. F.O. 5/2581.
[5] Durand to Lansdowne, 19 March 1905. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xxxii.

8

The Moroccan Crisis, April–December 1905

1

The day after landing at Tangiers the German Emperor spoke of his determination to uphold Moroccan independence and not to recognise any agreements made without his consent.[1] This intervention came at a most inopportune time for the French. Since the end of 1904 a French mission, led by Saint-René Taillandier, had been in Fez pressing the Sultan to agree to sweeping changes which would have riveted the French hold on the country; but even before the Kaiser made his demonstration the Moors had put up an obstinate resistance, and the prospect of German support finally determined them to defy the French. White, the British representative at Tangiers, reported on 2 April that the French 'will not be able by peaceful means to overcome the opposition which the Sultan will now feel himself to be in a position to offer'.[2] Even so, the government, although Balfour called the Kaiser's visit 'mere mischief-making',[3] was not at first inclined to take it very seriously. Lansdowne on 3 April believed that 'the elements have had the effect of curtailing the visit to Tangier, and perhaps much harm will not have been done'.[4] He ignored another appeal for peace by Delcassé, who on the very day of the visit pointed out how Germany was using Russian weakness to pursue her own claims in Morocco and declared that 'il faudrait qu'il y eût la paix'.[5] If Lansdowne had wished to take up Delcassé's suggestion, one possible way lay easily to hand: on 26 March Hardinge had transmitted a message from Witte that the Czar's mind was so evenly

[1] B.D. III.71.
[2] White to Lansdowne, despatch No. 51, 2 April 1905. F.O. 99/421.
[3] Nicolson to Lansdowne, despatch No. 46, 23 March 1905 (received 1 April), and minute by Balfour. F.O. 72/220. Reproduced B.D. III.70, but without the minute.
[4] Lansdowne to Bertie, 3 April 1905. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xi.
[5] Bertie to Lansdowne, despatch No. 113A, 31 March 1905. F.O. 27/3705.

balanced between war and peace that an appeal from the King would decide him in favour of the latter.[1] But Lansdowne refused to act on Witte's proposal.[2]

Lansdowne had not expected and did not at first understand the German move. But others, who were watching Germany with anxiety and suspicion, were more alive to its possible significance. The anti-German Mallet sensed from the beginning that a great conflict was imminent; like Delcassé, he attributed German activity to Russian defeats and predicted on 31 March that 'we may expect developments'.[3] His correspondent, Bertie, also foresaw trouble between France and Germany and welcomed the fact that Morocco would be 'an open sore between France and Germany as Egypt was between France and ourselves'.[4] More extreme views were forced on Lansdowne himself as the crisis, instead of dying away as he had expected, became rapidly worse. It was not only in Morocco that British and German interests had suddenly started to conflict. On 29 March Eyre Crowe described how he had heard on the best authority that Germany had decided to reverse her foreign policy and seek the friendship, not of Russia, but of Britain's own Far Eastern partners, Japan and the United States.[5] Both countries had shown signs of responding, and Roosevelt had even spoken, twice, to Durand of the need for Britain to allay German fears.[6] Lansdowne believed that there was truth behind Crowe's report,[7] and his irritation against the Germans grew. By 9 April he was writing in a completely different tone of the Tangiers visit. 'We can hardly regard this ebullition as an isolated incident. . . . We shall, I have little doubt, find that the Emperor avails himself of every opportunity which he can make in order to put spokes in our wheels.'[8] This estimate appeared to be confirmed when on the 14th Roosevelt told Durand that a 'conviction of English hostility has completely taken possession of [the] Emperor's mind and is disturbing him to [an] extent which is ludicrous'.[9]

[1] Hardinge to Lansdowne, telegram No. 54, 26 March 1905. F.O. 65/1706.
[2] Lansdowne to Hardinge, 3 April 1905. Hardinge MSS, vol. vii.
[3] Mallet to Bertie, 31 March 1905. Bertie MSS, Series A.
[4] Bertie to Mallet, 31 March 1905. Ibid.
[5] Memo by Crowe, 29 March 1905. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xiv.
[6] Durand to Lansdowne, 10 March 1905. Ibid., vol. xxviii. Durand to Lansdowne, 14 March. Ibid., vol. xxxii.
[7] Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 334.
[8] Lansdowne to Lascelles, 9 April 1905. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xiv.
[9] Durand to Lansdowne, 14 March 1905. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xxvi.

Renewed fear of German hostility put new life into the flagging entente; and this was especially true because the main German challenge was in Morocco. Britain had made the entente at the price of strategic concessions there which had, as the Army and Navy had pointed out, left her vulnerable in the Western Mediterranean. What Hardinge later called this 'serious flaw'[1] had not diminished in importance since 1903. The prospect of a French base on the Moroccan coast was already alarming enough, and the French had paid their price by concessions in Egypt and co-operation in the Far East; but the prospect of a German base was still worse. Germany's protection of the Moors had moreover afforded her diplomacy an opening by winning their gratitude, and by 19 April Lansdowne was telling Nicolson that 'it would not much surprise me if Germany was to seek for compensation in the shape of a coaling-station'.[2] But since the British had already recognised France as the paramount Power in Morocco it was only with her help that they could easily resist German designs there. In her own interests Britain had to keep close to France. She accordingly decided, on 11 April, to join France in rejecting a German proposal for an international conference on Morocco. Lansdowne commented that 'the French would never forgive us if we failed them', and Balfour agreed, adding that 'the Germans are making themselves quite impossible'.[3] They began to move towards that more positive view of the entente already held by the majority of the Foreign Office.

British fears sprang to life when on 22 April Delcassé, the architect of the entente, resigned. Although he withdrew his resignation almost at once, it was an open secret that many members of the French Cabinet, and especially Rouvier, the Prime Minister, wanted a policy of concession to Germany and would not have been sorry to see him go. His policy had also met with heavy criticism in the French Chamber, and it was plain that his hold on office was precarious. The entente was in great danger, and the anti-German forces in Britain determined to precipitate Lansdowne into an unequivocal pledge of support to France. Foremost among them was Mallet, who only a few days before had written that the

[1] B.D. VII.3.
[2] Lansdowne to Nicolson, 19 April 1905. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xxviii.
[3] Nicolson to Lansdowne, telegram No. 19, 11 April 1905, and minutes by Balfour and Lansdowne. F.O. 99/434.

entente 'has put us in a position which the Germans held for many years and we must do everything in our power to keep it'.[1] Two days later he described his activities to Bertie.

When I saw Delcassé's resignation I wrote to Lord Lansdowne to say that I thought things looked serious for the entente and asked him what we should do supposing Germany pressed home her victory and asked for a port. I urged him to let you tell the French government that we should see them through. Lord L. answered: 'consult Admiralty', so I went over to see Fisher.

He said, 'of course the Germans will ask for Mogador and I shall tell Lord L. that if they do we must *at least* have Tangier—of course it is all rot and it would not matter to us whether the Germans got Mogador or not but I'm going to say so all the same'.[2] . . . He is a splendid chap and simply longs to have a go at Germany. I 'abound in his sense' and told him I would do all I could with Lord L.[3]

Mallet described Fisher's letter, and with justification, as 'stunning'. It told Lansdowne that the Germans would certainly demand a Moroccan port and that their acquisition of one would be 'vitally detrimental' to British interests. Fisher concluded that 'this seems a golden opportunity for fighting the Germans in alliance with the French so I earnestly hope you may be able to bring this about. . . . All I hope is that you will send a telegram to Paris that the English and French fleets are *one*. We could have the German fleet, the Kiel Canal and Schleswig-Holstein within a fortnight.'[4]

Mallet then went on to say that Lansdowne got Fisher's letter and his minutes on the morning of Easter Sunday, 23 April. Immediately he telegraphed to Balfour:

Germany may press France for a port on the Moorish coast. Admiralty think this fatal. May I advise French Government not to accede without giving us full opportunity of conferring with them as to manner in which demand might be met?[5]

[1] Mallet to Bertie, 13 April 1905. Bertie MSS, Series A.

[2] That this really was Fisher's opinion is made more likely by his admission, to the new government, in February 1906, that the Germans could if necessary be allowed a port in Morocco (see pp. 275–6).

[3] Mallet to Bertie, 24 April 1905. Bertie MSS, Series A.

[4] Fisher to Lansdowne, 22 April 1905. Marder, *Fear God and Dread Nought*, vol. ii, p. 55.

[5] Lansdowne to Balfour, telegram, 23 April 1905. Balfour MSS, Add. MSS 49729.

A letter later in the day expanded this telegram.

The French are I fancy thoroughly frightened and realise that they are in a bad mess—Russia can't help them and they are not at all sure that we would. Nor am I at all sure that we ought to do so except in certain eventualities.

But it is a bad thing that the Germans should have been able to discredit the entente—Delcassé is going to remain but he had to tender his resignation and the debates in the Chamber show that many of his countrymen think that he blundered badly and that France will have to make atonement in one form or another.

The cession of a Moorish port is at least a conceivable form of atonement. I sent to the Admiralty to know what they thought—the result was the characteristic effusion from Jack Fisher which I enclose. It would be amusing to confront our colleagues with the seizure 'of the German Fleet, the Kiel Canal and Schleswig-Holstein' as a 'fait accompli' at our next meeting.

We can't go so fast as that but I do think that we ought to let the French government. . . .[1]

Unfortunately the letter breaks off at this point, for Balfour suddenly arrived at Bowood in his car. Together he and Lansdowne then drafted a telegram which was sent to Bertie that evening. It instructed him to tell Delcassé that Britain was ready to join France in offering 'strong opposition' to a German demand for a port in Morocco. It asked for full consultation between the two governments if the demand was made and concluded: 'German attitude in this dispute seems to me most unreasonable having regard to M. Delcassé's attitude and we desire to give him all the support we can.'[2]

This was a very strong telegram and contained expressions—'strong opposition', 'all the support we can'—which without actually committing Britain to the use of armed force certainly implied its possibility. Mallet admitted that it was 'not quite as strong as I could wish—but all that could have been expected under the circumstances'. He hoped that the French would 'read between the lines' and realise that 'we shall not be able to leave them in the lurch if Germany resorts to force'—although this,

[1] Lansdowne to Balfour, 23 April 1905. Ibid.

[2] B.D. III.90. The editors say that it is missing from the regular F.O. volume, F.O. 27/3708. It is in fact there in paraphrase form and is given the date, 23 April, which must be right.

'unluckily for us', was not her intention until she had increased her fleet.[1] The telegram certainly carried these overtones and the assurance it contained was certainly capable of being developed into a full-scale alliance; but, on the other hand, it could not be denied that Lansdowne had not gone as far as Mallet and Fisher had wished and had stopped short of definite commitment. This became still clearer when on 3 May Cambon, according to his own account, tried to get from him a definite statement of what Britain would do if Germany did demand a port or took other action more menacing still. Lansdowne would not be drawn. 'Nous n'en sommes pas là; pour le moment nous n'avons qu'à attendre et à laisser l'Allemagne se découvrir; il suffit qu'on sache que nous sommes en complet accord.'[2] Balfour moreover saw through Fisher's deception. Writing to him on the 26th he agreed that the Germans were 'behaving abominably' and that Britain must prevent their 'squeezing any illegitimate advantage' out of the crisis, but doubted the value of a Moroccan port to them. Such a port could only be converted into a suitable base after 'immense expenditure' and would then require a large garrison to defend it.[3] Neither was the King warlike: on 1 May, during a visit to Paris, he even agreed with Radolin, the German Ambassador there, that no radical changes could be made in Morocco without the consent of all the interested Powers.[4]

Another attempt by Mallet to obtain a binding commitment to France also failed. The crisis in Morocco had coincided with a crisis in the Far East, caused by the stay of the Russian Baltic Fleet in French waters, at Kamranh Bay in Indo-China. This French hospitality created great excitement in Japan, and MacDonald was afraid that if it was prolonged the Japanese would attack the Russians even while they were under its protection.[5] At Hayashi's request, Lansdowne made an appeal at Paris but, although it was received favourably, it had no apparent result and Japanese exasperation grew.[6] The crisis reached its height on the

[1] Mallet to Bertie, 24 April 1905. Bertie MSS, Series A.
[2] D.D.F. VI.390.
[3] Marder, *Fear God and Dread Nought*, vol. ii, p. 57.
[4] G.P. XX–II.6848.
[5] MacDonald to Lansdowne, 21 April 1905. F.O. Print ('Rights and proceedings of belligerents in neutral territory'), vol. 8694, No. 42.
[6] Lansdowne to Bertie, 19 April 1905. Ibid., No. 34. Lansdowne to MacDonald, 19 April 1905. Ibid., No. 35. MacDonald to Lansdowne, 23 April 1905. Ibid., No. 47.

same day—22 April—as that in Morocco. On that day Fisher wrote to Balfour speculating: 'Suppose the Japanese attack Roji in Kamranh Bay as they are justified in doing, will France fight Japan? If so, we fight France! What pickings for the German Emperor!'[1] This danger opened the way for further pressure on Lansdowne by Mallet and the Admiralty. On 22 or 23 April Mallet wrote to C. I. Thomas, Assistant Secretary at the Admiralty:

> The real difficulty of the present situation in Kamranh Bay—
> If we tell the French we will back them up over Morocco we cannot tell them at the same time we will fight them about Kamranh Bay.
> Has Sir. J. Fisher a way out of this? Could we say, if you clear the Russian out of Kamranh Bay and maintain a real neutrality, we will fight Germany for you?[2]

To this letter, Thomas appended a note: 'Mr. Mallet informed that Admiralty concur'.[3] But once again these efforts came to nothing, and on the 24th Lansdowne learnt that the Russians had left Kamranh Bay.[4]

The first stages of the crisis had shown a clear divergence of opinion between Balfour and Lansdowne and their more extreme advisers. Lansdowne was ready to go to war with Germany but only, as he told Balfour, in 'certain eventualities', only if British interests were clearly threatened. The entente was a valuable diplomatic arrangement which it was desirable to preserve, but it was not an overriding principle of policy which must be defended at all costs. For Mallet and Fisher, on the other hand, friendship with France and hostility to Germany were fundamental principles of foreign policy, and Fisher even admitted that he regarded Morocco itself as only a pretext for an Anglo-German conflict.

2

Lansdowne did not lose his balance under the impact of the Moroccan crisis. Events in the Far East continued to be at least as important to him. Even now, the danger of a Franco-German intervention in favour of Russia during the peace negotiations was re-

[1] Marder, op. cit., vol. ii, p. 58. Dated by copy in Add. MSS 49710.
[2] Mallet to Thomas, 22 or 23 April, and minute by Thomas. Fisher MSS, Box 17, envelope 2. Mallet's letter is dated 23 April; but since Thomas's minute bears the date 22 April, it might in fact have been sent a day earlier.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Lansdowne to MacDonald, 24 April, 1905. F.O. Print vol. 8694, No. 49.

garded as serious. On 1 May, for example, Ottley, the Director of Naval Intelligence, told Fisher that he was basing his strategic plans upon the expectation that when peace came to be discussed there would be a confrontation between Britain and Japan on the one side and Russia, Germany, and France on the other. He believed that Britain could well find herself at war with the three Continental Powers by August.[1] But Lansdowne allowed neither the fear of this nor the complications of the Moroccan crisis to deter him from pursuit of a renewed Japanese alliance. Suddenly a brilliant prospect had opened up before the British: the extension of the alliance to cover India. If they could achieve this, they would have solved at one stroke the two problems—of the Far East and Central Asia—which had been the most serious confronting them since the government had taken office. This object therefore assumed precedence in Lansdowne's diplomacy. The first hint had come in Lansdowne's overture to Hayashi on 24 March. When, on 19 April, Hayashi replied offering to renew but not extend the alliance,[2] his proposals were held to be insufficient by Balfour and Clarke,[3] and on 17 May Lansdowne offered a bait. This was that the new alliance could be operative against attack by only one Power; but he hinted plainly that in return for this additional risk the British would expect it to be extended to cover India.[4]

Britain's pursuit of a larger alliance meant that she could not allow herself to be separated from Japan over any aspect of Far Eastern policy. Especially she must follow the Japanese in the rejection of any form of mediation. Komura had asked MacDonald on 3 April to 'make it very clear to H.M.G. how averse the Japanese Government were to anything in the shape of an International Peace Conference',[5] and Lansdowne had at once assured him that 'we thoroughly enter into his views with regard to the question of the Peace Conference'.[6] Fear of Japanese disapproval determined the reaction of the British to further appeals from France and Russia. On 30 April and again on 3 May Cambon spoke of Anglo-French mediation between the belligerents, but

[1] Ottley to Fisher, 1 May 1905. Fisher MSS, Box 17, envelope 2.
[2] B.D. IV.112.
[3] Clarke to Balfour 29 April 1905. Balfour MSS, Add. MSS 49701. Memo by Clarke, 4 May 1905. Sydenham MSS, vol. 1/4.
[4] B.D. IV.115.
[5] MacDonald to Lansdowne, telegram No. 83, 3 April 1905. F.O. 46/595.
[6] Lansdowne to MacDonald, telegram No. 30, 4 April 1905. F.O. 46/594.

met with no response from Lansdowne.[1] On 7 May Witte joined in, warning Spring-Rice that if the war was prolonged, 'it would ensure for an indefinite period the supremacy of the German Empire in Europe'[2]; but he met with no more success. Lansdowne remained deaf to all appeals. The fact was that the British had no sympathy for France's European predicaments. The Conservative government's preoccupations were naval and imperial, not military and Continental. Certainly Germany was an imperial rival; but Britain would be all the stronger in meeting her if Russian defeats had solved her problems in Central Asia and the Far East. With Europe, and with the maintenance of French strength there, they had no concern.

This was also obvious in Lansdowne's handling of the Moroccan crisis during May. Attention rather shifted away from Morocco itself. Clarke, when Balfour asked him about the likely value to Germany of a port in Morocco, was much more judicious than Fisher had been. Mogador was the only point on the Moroccan coast likely to be of use as a naval base. It would 'not add anything to the strength of Germany; but would entail additional tasks on our navy in the event of war'[3]—a verdict that fell far short of Fisher's claim that it would be 'vitally detrimental'. Clarke then went on, however, to say that 'it may be possible, as has been suggested, that the German game is, by creating trouble in Morocco, to strike a bargain in Asia Minor'.[4] It was this fear of French concessions elsewhere to Germany at Britain's expense which now began to absorb attention. The first suggestion of this sort came in a private letter from Bertie on 1 May.

> If there are any points in Africa other than Morocco and Egypt where the French might throw bones to the German watchdog to gnaw to our detriment you ought to indicate I think to Cambon what concessions—which we know the Germans want—we should particularly object to.[5]

Bertie's letter evoked an immediate response in London. There had always been intermittent rumours of German pressure for coaling stations, and these rumours were now becoming more

[1] D.D.F. VI.396. Bertie to Lansdowne, 30 April 1905. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xi. Lansdowne to Bertie, despatch No. 261, 3 May 1905. F.O. 27/3703.
[2] Spring-Rice to Lansdowne, despatch No. 299, 7 May 1905. F.O. 65/1700.
[3] Clarke to Balfour, 29 April and 4 May 1905. Balfour MSS, Add. MSS 49701.
[4] Clarke to Balfour, 4 May 1905. Ibid.
[5] Bertie to Lansdowne, 1 May 1905. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xi.

persistent. There were reports of German activity, not only in Morocco, but also in Madeira,[1] in the Canaries,[2] in the Dutch East Indies,[3] in Asia Minor,[4] and at Haichow in China.[5] The danger described by Bertie seemed therefore to be a very real one. Once again the Admiralty pressed for a definite commitment. Ottley, told of Bertie's letter, replied on the 10th:

> What Germany wants is coaling stations and undoubtedly our interest is to oppose tooth and nail any such stations being acquired by her.
>
> The French should be told that we will support them to the last extremity in resisting any such demands.[6]

Grierson, the Director of Military Intelligence, agreed that Germany was very anxious to acquire naval bases and thought that 'whether H.M.G. would be justified in telling France that "we will support them to the last extremity in resisting any such demands" is a matter calling for very serious consideration'. In Grierson's opinion, the main danger lay in France's giving Germany 'a free hand in some part of the world other than Africa'. This was most likely to happen in China, where a free hand would be a 'very distinct gain to Germany' without appearing to be detrimental to French interests, which France considered to be threatened by the Japanese.[7]

Villiers, Assistant Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, collected these opinions together on 16 May and added notes on other points at which there had been rumours of German activity—the Canto Islands (a part of the Azores group), Las Palmas, Fernando Po, and Liberia. Villiers himself did not think that a mere exchange of territory between France and Germany would be a threat to Britain—'it does not make much difference to us whether our neighbours are France or Germany'—but clearly did believe that a French promise to give Germany a free hand in some other part of the world would be dangerous.[8]

Some at least of the dangers in Morocco could be avoided by a

[1] See pp. 226–8.
[2] Nicolson to Lansdowne, telegram No. 28, 5 May 1905. F.O. 72/2211.
[3] C.O. to F.O., 14 April 1905. F.O. 37/880.
[4] Egerton to Lansdowne, 5 May 1905. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xvii.
[5] Satow to Lansdowne, 18 May 1905. F.O. 17/1671.
[6] Memo by D.N.I., 10 May 1905. F.O. 64/1630.
[7] Memo by D.M.I., 16 May 1905. Ibid.
[8] Memo by Villiers, 16 May 1905. Ibid.

direct agreement with Spain. One of the most effective criticisms of the entente had been that its attempt to guard against French acquisition of the coast opposite Gibraltar by giving it to Spain would be no protection against a Franco-Spanish combination, or against a successful French coercion of Spain. But a direct non-alienation agreement with Spain would both avoid this danger and exclude the Germans. On 12 May Bertie suggested that Britain should take advantage of French difficulties with Germany to negotiate such an arrangement. She could offer to assist Spain in defending her colonial possessions, and in return Spain could engage not to alienate them and not to build works against Gibraltar.[1] This idea was taken up by Lansdowne, and on 3 June he instructed Nicolson to tell the Spanish Foreign Minister, who was about to visit London, that while he was there they could discuss 'the possibility of arriving at a mutually advantageous understanding as to the future of certain strategical points now under the control of Spain'.[2] Like Bertie he was willing to exploit Franco-German divisions where British interests demanded it.

But the greater danger of a Franco-German bargain at Britain's expense remained. There were of course some—Mallet, Fisher, Ottley, and perhaps Grierson—who wanted to avoid it by an Anglo-French alliance. Bertie also favoured a limited form of commitment.

> What we ought to do is to come to an understanding with France for the defence of certain Anglo-French interests, viz: the non-acquisition by Germany of any political position in Holland or her colonies, or any port on the coast (Atlantic) of Morocco.[3]

Clarke was the first to understand France's European difficulties, and he wrote on 9 May that 'the unfortunate thing is that we are not of as much value to France as is Russia. It is impossible that we could be and this must temper the "entente cordiale" '.[4] By 7 June he had reached the conclusion that 'in any and every case we must stand by the "entente cordiale" '.[5]

There is no indication that the government was prepared to go

[1] Bertie to Lansdowne, 12 May 1905. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xi.
[2] Lansdowne to Nicolson, 3 June 1905. Ibid., vol. xxvi.
[3] Bertie to Mallet, 19 May 1905. Bertie MSS, Series A.
[4] Clarke to Esher, 9 May 1905. Esher MSS, Sir G. Clarke, vol. iv.
[5] Clarke to Esher, 7 June 1905. Ibid.

so far; indeed on the 23rd Lansdowne was actually authorised to make soundings about British participation in the Baghdad Railway.[1] Lansdowne on 17 May did no more than to impress upon Cambon the need for complete mutual confidence:

> Our two governments should continue to treat one another with the most absolute confidence, should keep one another fully informed of everything which came to their knowledge, and should, so far as possible, discuss in advance any contingencies by which they might in the course of events find themselves confronted.[2]

This famous offer had a quite limited object. It was not to protect France, or sustain her in Europe, but to forestall a Franco-German imperial compromise at Britain's expense. In order to leave no doubt about this, Lansdowne told Cambon plainly of British fears that 'to put an end to a state of things which could not fail to be highly inconvenient to them, the French Government might be induced to purchase the acquiescence of Germany by concessions of a kind which we were not likely to regard with favour in other parts of the world'. It was from this that he deduced the need for 'absolute frankness'.[3]

In spite of this clear warning, Cambon, in his excitement at what he regarded as a firm British offer, altogether failed to grasp its true nature. He reported to Delcassé that Lansdowne had promised that

> si . . . nous avions des raisons sérieuses de croire à une agression injustifiée de la part d'une certaine puissance, le Gouvernement brittanique serait tout prêt à se concerter avec le gouvernement français sur les mesures à prendre.

Cambon sent his account of the conversation to Lansdowne on the 24th. Lansdowne then saw that it did not represent what he had said, and that it did not satisfy his requirements. The danger he was trying to guard against was not so much a German aggression against France as a French bargain with Germany at Britain's expense. In his conversation of 17 May he had, therefore, been care-

[1] See p. 222.

[2] B.D. III.94. There is no record in Balfour's Cabinet Reports to the King that an alliance was even discussed. But this is not by itself conclusive: by this period the Cabinet report had become a jejune, uninformative document.

[3] Ibid.

ful not to limit it to the case of an attack by Germany but to extend it to cover all contingencies. Only by such an agreement for general consultation could he hope to keep the French in line. He therefore wrote at once to Cambon, on the 25th, to clear up the misunderstanding. He again said that the two governments should keep each other informed of *everything* which came to their knowledge and discuss in advance *any* contingencies with which they might be confronted. To dispel any remaining doubt, he then repeated that such consultations were to be held 'not so much in consequence of some acts of unprovoked aggression on the part of another Power, as in anticipation of any complications to be apprehended during the somewhat anxious period through which we are at present passing'. Lansdowne's formula both achieved his aim of tying France down and committed Britain less than Cambon's, which, by making specific reference to the possibility of an attack on France, had made the offer much more pointed.[1]

But Cambon, who did not fully appreciate the motives behind Lansdowne's offer, interpreted the note of 25 May as an extension of the verbal statement of the 17th. He concentrated only on the apparent amplification of Lansdowne's earlier promise. Lansdowne had, he told Delcassé on the 29th, given it 'une portée plus large et plus prochaine': 'ce n'est plus à une entente en cas d'agression qu'il nous convie, c'est à une discussion immédiate et à un examen de la situation générale'. This Cambon regarded as 'une entente générale qui constituerait en réalité une alliance'.[2] It was a natural mistake to make: the precise import of the letter of 25 May depended upon the preoccupations of the reader, and Cambon's and Lansdowne's preoccupations were quite different. In Paris, Delcassé fully accepted Cambon's account. Probably he was encouraged by indiscreet talk by Bertie about giving the entente 'muscles', 'les moyens de montrer sa force'.[3] On 6 June he told his colleagues that 'l'Angleterre a fait des ouvertures en vue d'une action commune avec la France contre l'Allemagne', and tried to win their consent to the acceptance of these overtures. But the Cabinet followed Rouvier, who feared the result of a war with Germany;

[1] B.D. III.95.
[2] D.D.F. VI.465.
[3] Paléologue, *Un grand tournant de la politique mondiale 1904–1906*, p. 329. But the King exhorted Delcassé to settle with Germany, and refused to say what Britain would do if France were attacked. Ibid., pp. 315, 319, 329–30.

and Delcassé resigned.[1] It was the worst blow the entente had ever suffered.[2]

The blow was, however, softened by simultaneous events in the Far East. On 25 May the Japanese decided to accept the proposal to extend the alliance by making it operative against attack by one Power only and by bringing India within its scope.[3] On 28 May the Japanese Fleet and the Russian Baltic Fleet at last met, at Tsushima. The result of this great battle was not the defeat, but the annihilation, of the Russian Fleet: Clarke sent the Prime Minister figures on 1 June to show that of its 11 battleships, 7 had been sunk and 4 captured.[4] The battle was the culmination of Japanese victories which had been steadily altering the world balance of naval power. Russia ceased to be an effective force at sea, while Britain, flanked by the United States and a Japan victorious and strengthened by the captures from Russia, regained a position of superiority at sea which she had not enjoyed since the

[1] D.D.F. VI. Annexe I.

[2] This whole episode became of course the subject of intense controversy. Rumours that Britain had offered France an offensive and defensive alliance reached the ears of the Germans soon after Delcassé's fall. The King minuted that this allegation was 'nearly as absurd as it is false', and Lansdowne denied flatly to the German Ambassador that such an alliance had 'ever been offered or even discussed on either side' (B.D.III. 98–9; G.P. XX–II.6858). In October, however, the French paper *Le Matin* published a story that Britain had offered France armed support just before Delcassé's resignation (B.D. III.100–4). Sanderson then repeated Lansdowne's disclaimer to Metternich (G.P. XX–II.6873. Sanderson to Lansdowne, 9 Oct. 1905, Lansdowne MSS, vol. xxxii) and also wrote privately to Lansdowne testifying that the report was 'entirely imaginary' (9 Oct. 1905. Ibid., vol. xxix).

But the story became a part of history. Mévil, who was close to Delcassé, repeated as early as 1909 that Britain had offered military support and a definite agreement (Mévil, *De la paix de Francfort à la Conférence d'Algésiras*, p. 268). Delcassé himself claimed in 1922 that in 1905 it would have been possible to proceed to a formal alliance and that he had received a British offer of help just before his resignation (*The Times*, 27 March 1922, p. 6). On the other hand, the British principals persisted in their denials in later years—Sanderson in 1922, Lansdowne in 1919 and 1927 (B.D. III.105; Newton, op. cit., p. 484). A vigorous controversy grew up.

All this was before the publication of the relevant volume of the French documents in 1935, and this leaves little doubt that French allegations were founded upon Cambon's misinterpretation of Lansdowne's notes. Mévil says that the British offer was received just before the arrival of the King of Spain in Paris on 30 May. We now know that Cambon's first despatch reached Delcassé on that date; and when Delcassé sent instructions to Cambon to accept the offer, he said explicitly that the despatches had reached him just after the King's reception (D.D.F. VI.470). Cambon, who knew of Rouvier's opposition, demurred and replied on 1 June that he could not, without the consent of the Cabinet, open talks 'qui . . . nous mèneront à une alliance' (D.D.F. VI.480). Delcassé declared in 1922 that the offer had been received within forty-eight hours of his resignation; probably he was thinking of this letter from Cambon, which set in train the events leading to his resignation and did not reach him until 3 June (Paléologue, op. cit., pp. 346–7).

[3] B.D. IV.116.

[4] Clarke to Sandars, 1 June 1905. Balfour MSS, Add. MSS 49701.

1880s. Later in the year Fisher gave figures to show the extent of the change that had been wrought. Counting a first-class ship as one unit, a second-class ship as a half, and a third-class ship as a quarter, the position just before Tsushima (which had itself benefited from earlier Japanese victories) had been as follows.

	Battleships	Armoured Cruisers
Britain	46	27½
France + Russia	32¼	19¼
Germany + Russia	32	8¼
France + Germany + Russia	49½	23¼

After Togo's victory the position had changed thus.[1]

	Battleships	Armoured Cruisers
Britain	46	27½
France + Russia	23	17
Germany + Russia	22¾	6¼
Germany + France + Russia	40¼	21

Fisher observed:

> How profoundly the situation as regards battleships has been modified in our favour by the great Japanese victory may be gathered from the fact that whereas *before* it, we should have been in a position of serious numerical inferiority if called upon to face a coalition of the three Powers, France, Russia and Germany, we dispose *at the moment* of a force of battleships *considerably superior* to the combined battleship strength of these three Powers. Remember it is the battleship that determines the victory.[2]

The Japanese victories had therefore solved not only the problems of the Far East and Central Asia but also a third problem which had beset the government for many years—the strain on the Navy. The Anglo-Japanese Alliance was now far stronger than a Continental coalition could be. 'I have never felt so happy for years over anything abroad as with the destruction of the Russian fleet' rejoiced Brodrick,[3] and this was the general reaction; there was no indication of concern for France.[4] Anglo-German rivalry was re-

[1] A. J. Marder, *British Naval Policy, 1880–1905*, p. 511, n.50; p. 512, n.51.
[2] Memo by Fisher for Committee on Estimates, Nov. 1905. Cawdor memoranda.
[3] Brodrick to Ampthill, 2 June 1905. Ampthill MSS, vol. xi.
[4] There is one doubtful exception to this. Arnold-Forster confided to his diary on 31 May that the Japanese victory was 'satisfactory, no doubt, for the moment; but full

garded as naval and imperial, not European, in character. If it had been concerned with the European balance of power, as Franco-German rivalry was, then, as Delcassé pointed out, Russian defeats would have been disastrous; but since it was naval and imperial, Russian defeats, by eliminating another rival, could only strengthen Britain. This process could be seen in operation when, after the battle of Tsushima, five battleships were transferred from Chinese to European waters.[1]

There was, moreover, a good chance that, if the new Japanese treaty could be concluded, the disappearance of Russia as a naval Power would be permanent. Ottley had already pointed out on 12 April that, if the treaty became operative against one Power only, Russia would be discouraged from re-building her fleet to try conclusions against Japan a second time. She might be able to outbuild Japan; but if she knew that Britain would come in against her in any case, she could well decide that competition was hopeless.[2] The Admiralty repeated in early June that the new treaty 'might conceivably lead to a definite abandonment of her [Russia's] aspirations to sea power' and so free Britain from 'the perpetual menace which the expansion of the Russian fleet has constituted'.[3]

Lansdowne therefore pressed ahead vigorously with the Japanese negotiations and circulated a draft treaty to the Cabinet on 31 May.[4] The objects of the alliance were declared to be the preservation of China's integrity and the maintenance of the 'Open Door' throughout her Empire and the protection of the rights of the two Powers in Eastern and Southern Asia including, specifically, not only their own possessions but also those areas contiguous to their own possessions. If, in defence of these objects, either Power was involved by aggressive action in war, its ally would come to its aid; and one clause even implied that Japan would give military assistance in India. After the end of the war, each Power should 'endeavour to maintain at all times available for concentration in the Far East a naval force superior to that of any third Power'. Finally, the new treaty was not to become operative until the end

of possible danger in the future' (Arnold-Forster MSS, Add. MSS 50347). He could, however, have been referring simply to the danger of Japanese predominance in the Far East.

[1] Marder, op. cit., p. 451. B.D. IV.122–4.

[2] Remarks by D.N.I., 70th meeting of C.I.D., 12 April 1905. C.I.D. Records, Cab. 2/1.

[3] Marder, op. cit., p. 454. [4] B.D. IV.121.

of the Russian war. Unlike the treaty of 1902, the new arrangements met with no opposition. Lansdowne's draft was only modified in detail by the Cabinet[1] before it was presented to Hayashi as the official British proposal on 10 June.

3

The resignation of Delcassé came as a great shock in London.[2] Lansdowne told Bertie that it has produced a 'very painful impression'. France had given way 'in a mere fit of panic' and as a result 'the entente is quoted at a much lower price than it was a fortnight ago'. He even thought that 'if the French are really on the run we might perhaps extract a not unsatisfactory settlement' out of a conference.[3] Even before Delcassé's fall, the British had been doubtful of French steadfastness; now, with Delcassé gone and replaced as Foreign Minister by Rouvier, his leading opponent, they altogether lost their faith in France. Balfour told the King on 10 June that 'if Germany is really desirous of obtaining a port on the coast of Morocco, and if such a proceeding be a menace to our interests, it must be to other means than French assistance that we must look for our protection'.[4] One possible means of protection, and one which had been decided upon even before the fall of Delcassé, was a direct agreement with Spain. Villa Urrutia, the Spanish Foreign Minister, was then in London on a state visit with

[1] Balfour, by inserting a provision that the navies against which Britain had to measure her Far Eastern strength should only be *European*, ensured that there would be no naval competition with the United States (foreshadowed by his minute on O'Brien to Mallet, 2 June 1905. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xxxii). Arnold-Forster thought that an explicit reference to Seistan and Afghanistan in Lansdowne's draft was stretching Japanese obligations too far; but the Cabinet was anxious that the treaty should cover areas adjacent to India as well as India itself, and the draft given to Hayashi included a reference to the 'special rights and interests [of the Powers] in the countries in the proximity' of their possessions. Arnold-Forster was also afraid that the prospect of Japanese military aid in India would tempt Britain to reduce her own strength there, and in this case the government, mindful of their own weakness, agreed with him. There was, reported Balfour to the King, 'a real danger that if a Radical Government came into power they would reduce the Army below the limits of safety, and this danger will be greatly augmented if they think they can rely on an unlimited supply of men from Japan'. In the draft as finally agreed on, the Japanese obligation was limited to providing a force which should be equal (up to a certain maximum) with Britain's own force in India. Arnold-Forster MSS: diary for 25 May, Add. MSS 50347 and Cabinet memo of 2 June. Add. MSS 50317. Balfour to the King, 9 June 1905, Lansdowne MSS, vol. xxxii. B.D. IV.125, 155.

[2] Both Brodrick and Arnold-Forster refer to the anxiety felt. Diary entry of 7 June 1905. Arnold-Forster MSS, Add. MSS 50348. Brodrick to Ampthill, 9 June 1905. Ampthill MSS, vol. xi.

[3] Lansdowne to Bertie, 12 June 1905. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xi.

[4] Lee, *King Edward VII*, vol. ii, p. 344.

King Alfonso, and Lansdowne opened the subject with him on 8 June. He suggested an arrangement by which Spain would engage herself not to build works against Gibraltar and not to alienate certain strategic possessions—primarily the Moroccan seaboard, the Balearics, the Canaries, and Fernando Po—in return for a British promise to defend them against attack.[1] It was only by an accident that the French were let into the secret of these negotiations.[2]

It was still necessary, however, to keep the French in line as far as possible. A French concession to Germany in Morocco or elsewhere in Africa would have a damaging effect, and would not be easy to prevent. Balfour wrote on 22 June that Britain must follow the French lead in Morocco[3]—to the disgust of Edward VII, who protested that 'I should have preferred that England should have led—and not "follow the French lead"!'[4] Rouvier was told on 16 June that if he persisted in rejecting the conference, then Britain would do so too.[5] Slowly confidence returned, although it was never (during the lifetime of the Conservative government) to reach again the level it had attained under Delcassé. Rouvier, his early attempts to strike a direct bargain with the Germans having failed, turned more and more to Britain and kept her informed of his Moroccan negotiations with the Germans. By 27 June Sanderson believed that the French had recovered their nerve.[6]

As the danger of a Franco-German compromise receded, it was replaced by the opposite danger of a Franco-German conflict. Rouvier, Lansdowne learnt on the 21st, had been alarmed by the insistence of the Germans on a conference and the violence of their language.[7] His policy of compromise with Germany collapsed completely. There were other ominous signs: a change of govern-

[1] Lansdowne to Nicolson, despatch No. 64, 8 June 1905. F.O. 72/2208.

[2] Nicolson, now Ambassador at Madrid, asked for authorisation to inform the French Ambassador there, and his request was granted (Nicolson to Lansdowne, telegram No. 49, and Lansdowne to Nicolson, telegram No. 46, 4 July 1905. F.O. 72/2211). Bertie protested against this, declaring that security for Gibraltar was not a permanent French interest (Bertie to Lansdowne, 8 July 1905. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xi), and his advice was accepted. A telegram at once went to Nicolson instructing him to withold his communication to the French Ambassador. But it was too late; he had already acted on his earlier instructions (Barrington to Bertie, 11 July 1905. Ibid.).

[3] Lee, op. cit., vol. ii, p. 344.

[4] Knollys to Balfour, 22 June 1905. Balfour MSS, Add. MSS 49685.

[5] B.D. III.124.

[6] Sanderson to Hardinge, 27 June 1905. Hardinge MSS, vol. vii.

[7] B.D. III.126.

ment in Madrid on 24 June which Nicolson feared would open the door for German influence[1]; and reports that the Sultan was about to give Germany a concession at the mouth of the Muluya.[2] Lansdowne was moved to give his strongest warning yet to Germany. On 28 June, speaking to Metternich, he again denied that an Anglo-French alliance had been even considered, but added that 'in dem Falle, den er aber für gänzlich ausgeschlossen halte, wo Deutschland light-heartedly einen Krieg gegen Frankreich vom Zaun bräche, es nicht vorauszusehen sei, wie weit die öffentliche Meinung in England die Regierung zur Unterstützung Frankreichs treiben würde'.[3] This warning was a strong one, but it was made by Britain, strengthened by Russian defeat, acting as an independent agent in defence of her own interests, and not as the ally of France. The French were not told of it, and Lansdowne rejected all idea of a closer connection with them. This had been suggested by Lister, Bertie's assistant at Paris, but Lansdowne replied on 10 July that 'the moment would not, in my opinion, be a very opportune one for suggesting either to the Cabinet or to the country an extension of the understanding already arrived at. Recent events have, I am afraid, undoubtedly shaken people's confidence in the steadfastness of the French nation.'[4] A few days later a semi-official approach did come from the French. On 21 July Deloncle, one of the most influential members of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the French Chamber, called on Lansdowne and 'expressed in the strongest terms the desire of himself and his friends to maintain a good understanding with this country and to co-operate with us in different parts of the world'. He had six specific proposals. The first was that 'as soon as peace was concluded between Russia and Japan, France, England, the United States and the Netherlands should come to an agreement to guarantee the preservation of the "status quo" in the Far East.

[1] Nicolson to Lansdowne, telegram No. 44, 20 June 1905. F.O. 72/2211. Nicolson to Lansdowne, despatch No. 123, 24 June 1905. F.O. 72/2209.

[2] Lansdowne to Bertie, despatch No. 419, 27 June 1905. F.O. 99/434.

[3] G.P. XX–II.6860. Lansdowne repeated this warning on 19 July (ibid., 6864) and Sanderson in October (ibid., 6873). Although it was later used by Grey as a precedent (B.D. III.219, 229), it appears only in the German account of the interview and not in the British (ibid., 132). Lansdowne, however, at once repeated it to Durand for transmission to Roosevelt (to Durand, 28 June 1905. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xxviii) and referred to it in a letter to Lascelles on 5 August (ibid., vol. xiv). Perhaps it did not appear in the official despatch because Lascelles was absent from Berlin at the time and the Embassy was in the charge of a junior official.

[4] Lansdowne to Lister, 10 July 1905. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xi.

France, he said, had a special interest in this question owing to the position of her Indo-Chinese possessions'. He also suggested a new arrangement in Siam, where Britain 'should, in exchange for concessions elsewhere, give France a certain preponderance even in the valley of the Menam'. The two countries should work together in the question of the Baghdad Railway: 'We should first make up our minds as to the line which we intended to adopt, and then impose conditions on Germany.' Deloncle's other proposals provided for Anglo-French co-operation in Arabia, Abyssinia, and the New Hebrides, all areas of persistent friction.[1] Even this overture, which fell far short of complete alliance, was not followed up by Lansdowne.[2] In any case his warning to Germany had already achieved its object. On 1 July, already alarmed by reports of British belligerence, she had agreed upon a compromise by which France gave her consent to a conference but in return received guarantees for her interests. This agreement was embodied in an exchange of notes on 8 July.[3] Once again the crisis receded.

The sudden danger of war in Europe had not deterred Lansdowne from the object which held priority in his diplomacy—the renewal of the Japanese Alliance. It had been condemned by Grierson on 16 June as of value only in war with Russia and even then only doubtfully[4]; but his views were ignored. The growing weakness of the government made haste necessary. In July it was defeated on a House of Commons vote; but, according to Esher, Balfour 'put aside all temptation to resign office while the Japanese Treaty remained unsigned'.[5] In the Far East all else was sacrificed to it. The Japanese had already declared their opposition to any form of mediation, and Lansdowne therefore resisted all proposals to bring pressure on them to moderate their terms and so bring the war to a quicker end. On 10 June, for example, the fallen Delcassé implored the British to soften the Japanese terms in case they forced Russia into the arms of Germany—a disastrous event

[1] Lansdowne to Bertie, despatch No. 506, 21 July 1905. F.O. 78/5449.

[2] The first proposal, would, of course, have cut across the Japanese Alliance and was inadmissible. Lansdowne was only, regretfully, held back from working with Germany in the Baghdad Railway through fear of public opinion (see pp. 224–5). The Abyssinian negotiations between Britain, France, and Italy, instituted in 1904, dragged on without definite result until after Lansdowne's resignation. There is no record of any new departures in the New Hebrides, Siam, or Arabia.

[3] B.D. III.137, 147.

[4] B.D. IV.127.

[5] Lord Esher, *Journals and Letters*, vol. ii, p. 92.

for Europe and for Britain herself.[1] This latest appeal from Delcassé, like all his others, was ignored. Even the Americans were rebuffed. Roosevelt, by the exercise of some pressure, had obtained the consent of the two belligerents to peace talks; but Lansdowne did nothing to help him in spite of the ostentatious support he received from the Kaiser.[2] When Durand telegraphed on 13 June that the Americans would like Britain to urge Japan to moderate her terms, Lansdowne at once instructed him to do nothing of the sort.[3] This attitude was maintained in spite of a warning from Hardinge that unless the Japanese became less demanding the peace conference would end in failure. Hardinge too wanted the Japanese to be given a hint that they should deal with Russia in a patient and conciliatory way; but on his letter advocating this the King minuted: 'I feel we ought not to interfere between the belligerents.'[4]

The main preoccupations of the Conservative government were, therefore, imperial and were to remain imperial until its resignation. But at the same time the summer of 1905 saw the first beginnings of a quite new concern for Europe. On 24 June, when Franco-German tension was at its height, Fisher asked Ottley to prepare plans for a naval war between Britain and Germany, with Britain acting in defence of France. Ottley pointed out on the 26th that the Anglo-French fleets would have a crushing superiority, even if Russia joined Germany. There was no reference to military intervention in Europe: Ottley merely suggested that the bulk of the British Fleet should be employed to blockade the German coast. His plans were then sent to Sir Arthur Wilson, the Commander-in-Chief of the Channel Fleet, and it was Wilson who took the decisive step when he pointed out that 'if . . . we went to war as the ally of France the result would depend entirely on the military operations on the French frontier'. He suggested that Britain could influence these directly by an attack on the northwest coast of Germany.[5]

This course was also advocated by Fisher. He started from the assumption that a second defeat of France 'would end in the aggrandizement of Germany to an extent which would be pre-

[1] Bertie to Lansdowne, despatch No. 207A, 10 June 1905. F.O. 27/3706.
[2] B.D. IV.77. [3] B.D. IV.81–2.
[4] Hardinge to Lansdowne, and minute by King, 13 June 1905. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xxv. [5] Marder, *British Naval Policy, 1880–1905*, pp. 502–5.

judicial to the whole of Europe and it might therefore be necessary for Great Britain in her own interests to lend France her active support'. But he took a remarkably sanguine view of the course of such a war. Britain and France would, he believed, have such an enormous naval preponderance that within three months Germany would have lost all her colonies and all her carrying trade and no longer be able to continue the war. The dangers of a German military defeat of France could be averted by a diversionary landing in Schleswig-Holstein.[1] Fisher's plan shows how slowly even advanced British thought was moving on this issue. The whole cast of mind of the government was imperial, their preoccupations for many years had been imperial, and it was only slowly and reluctantly that they were coming to recognise their involvement in Europe. Indeed, this recognition grew in the first place out of their imperial interests; for they realised that the result of a war between Germany and the entente, although fought over imperial and naval issues, might well be decided by the battles between the French and German armies in Europe. Even then Fisher's conception of the war was primarily naval. He expected the French and British military forces to do no more than hold the German Army while the Navy won the war for them; and the landing of the British force, not in France but in Schleswig-Holstein, was to be an essentially naval operation. But it was a start; and Clarke and Fisher together now brought the Committee of Imperial Defence to investigate the problem. Clarke on 11 July advised Balfour to appoint a special sub-committee to look into the possibility of offensive expeditions of the sort described by Fisher.[2] They were probably helped also by Arnold-Forster, who had told Chamberlain on 28 June of his fear that Germany would go to war 'deliberately, and as a matter of calculation', as she had in 1864, 1866, and 1870.[3] On 20 July it was therefore decided to set up a special sub-committee of the sort proposed by Clarke and Fisher; at the request of Brodrick, who was probably anxious not to disturb relations with Germany further, the Committee agreed that its deliberations should be kept entirely secret.[4] It was, according to

[1] Memo by Fisher, undated, but drawn up during the crisis at the end of June. Balfour MSS, Add. MSS 49711.

[2] Clarke to Balfour, 11 and 24 July 1905. Balfour MSS, Add. MSS 49701.

[3] Diary entry for 28 June 1905. Arnold-Forster MSS, Add. MSS 50348.

[4] Minutes of 76th meeting, 20 July, and 77th meeting, 26 July 1905. C.I.D. Records, Cab. 2/1.

Fisher in October, stressed by Balfour and laid down in advance that 'every project for offensive hostilities was to be subsidiary to the action of the Fleet, such as the occupation of isolated colonial possessions of the enemy, or the assistance of an ally by threatening descent on the hostile coast, or otherwise effecting a diversion on his behalf'.[1] Strategy was still essentially naval.

Meanwhile the situation of Holland and Belgium was being examined. Here too the British found that a full investigation of the conditions of naval and imperial rivalry with Germany necessarily brought attention back to Europe. At first it was the future of Holland, whose colonial empire would have been a splendid acquisition for an aspiring naval Power like Germany, which caused more concern. The Admiralty had been apprehensive about German designs from a very early date,[2] and Clarke raised the subject soon after the landing at Tangiers. A memorandum of 20 April asserted the danger of German acquisition of the Dutch East Indies and suggested that it could be avoided if they were brought under the protection of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance.[3] As soon as the question had been raised, it became obvious that the imperial problem—the future of the Dutch East Indies—depended upon the European problem—the future of Holland itself. Sanderson was the first to see this when he argued on 20 May against Clarke's proposal by pointing out that in effect it would be asking Japan to defend Holland as well as her empire.[4] The same idea was taken a stage further by Balfour in the Committee of Imperial Defence on 6 July. He then declared that, since the Dutch would never give up the East Indies voluntarily, German absorption of their homeland would be a necessary preliminary to absorption of their empire. This conclusion took him a long way. Since Britain could not in any case afford to see a strong naval Power established in the Dutch ports, it might, he said, 'be worth considering whether a formal guarantee of integrity, which would not materially add to our responsibilities, might be offered as an inducement, if such be needed, to prevent Holland from entering a German Zollverein'.[5] This idea was referred, in August, to Howard, the Minister at The

[1] Fisher to Sandars, 10 Oct. 1905. Balfour MSS, Add. MSS 49711.
[2] See p. 69.
[3] Memo by Clarke, 20 April 1905. C.I.D. Records, Cab. 4/1, Paper 55B.
[4] Memo by Sanderson, 20 May 1905. F.O. 37/880.
[5] Minutes of 74th meeting of C.I.D., 6 July 1905. C.I.D. Records, Cab. 2/1.

Hague, but he opposed it. Although the pan-German party wished to absorb Holland, and although it would be a 'national disaster' for Britain if they succeeded, he did not consider it likely that the German government would in fact pursue such an aim; and even if they did, the Dutch would 'never consent to enter the German Empire peacefully'. A guarantee would not, therefore, add any additional protection, while 'the Dutch are very proud and such a guarantee would be naturally repugnant to them'.[1] Lansdowne commented upon this letter:

> It does not seem to me at all convincing, but Howard is no doubt right in believing that Holland would never willingly consent to enter the German Empire. Whether he is also right in supposing that in no circumstances would Germany fasten a quarrel on her with the ulterior object of absorbing her is another matter.
>
> Nor am I quite convinced that the Dutch would scout the idea of an international guarantee if one were offered them. Sir G. Clarke's paper,[2] however, throws considerable doubt upon the value of such a guarantee, were it to be forthcoming.
>
> Of all Howard's suggestions, that to which I attach most weight is that we should do more to maintain friendly relations with the Dutch. The South African war estranged us from them and I think it should be our object to establish a closer intimacy.[3]

Whatever the reason, no action was taken upon the subject, and Clarke had to return to it in November.[4]

Consideration of Holland led in its turn to consideration of Belgium. This was more significant, because the Congo was of no importance to naval strategy and Belgium itself was therefore of purely European concern. Once again it was Clarke who led the way. On 1 August he circulated a paper to the Committee of Imperial Defence arguing that in the event of another Franco-German war 'military exigencies might induce the Germans to

[1] Howard to Sanderson, 11 Aug. 1905. Ibid., Cab. 17/69.

[2] Clarke himself summarised this paper for Balfour: 'The general conclusion at which I arrived was that such guarantees always break down in practice unless—which rarely happens—the interests of all the guaranteeing Powers require the fulfilment of the obligation when the critical moment presents itself'. Clarke was of course not opposed to a British guarantee of Holland, only to a collective guarantee. Clarke to Balfour, 17 September 1905. Balfour MSS, Add. MSS 49702.

[3] Minute by Lansdowne, quoted by Sanderson in memorandum of 24 August 1905. C.I.D. Records, Cab. 17/69.

[4] See p. 232.

violate the neutrality of Belgium. The inducement is certainly stronger for Germany than for France.' British interests were 'now more than ever opposed to the violation of Belgian territory', and since 'the German point of view has changed [since 1870] the need for preparation for active measures in defence of Belgian neutrality would be much greater now than in 1870'.[1] Clarke's arguments were at once challenged by Sanderson. He asserted that the treaty of 1839 by which Britain guaranteed Belgium was only a declaration of principle: 'To construe it as a positive pledge . . . to use material force for the maintenance of the guarantee in any circumstances and at whatever risk or inconvenience would be to read into it what no government can reasonably be expected to promise.' Sanderson then went on:

> It is a question for military experts whether either France or Germany could gain any advantage by violating the neutrality of Belgium in a war which would at all compensate for the hostility which such a proceeding would arouse. I have always been assured to the contrary. I do not know what change has occurred to alter the position of Germany in this respect.[2]

Plainly Sanderson used his influence consistently against all proposed anti-German measures. He could not however prevent the question from being considered; and as soon as it was considered there opened up the prospect, however remote, of British military intervention on the Continent. In March 1902, when the question was hardly more than academic, Lansdowne had declared that if Belgian neutrality were violated Britain might well be compelled to intervene. If she did, her main effort would be at sea. But, continued Lansdowne, 'I have always understood that our military system provided for the immediate despatch of a small force beyond the limits of these islands and that we contemplated the possibility of sending out an Army Corps as soon as we had had time to mobilize'. Only Salisbury had doubted the value of such academic deliberations.[3] Now, however, the question was no

[1] Lord Sydenham, *My Working Life*, pp. 185–6.
[2] Sanderson to Clarke, 10 Aug. 1905. C.I.D. Records, Cab. 17/69.
[3] Minute by Lansdowne, 17 March 1902. Balfour MSS, Add. MSS 49727. When asked his opinion, Salisbury had made the characteristic retort: 'It does not seem to me that much profit will be derived from meditations of this kind. At least I am sure I can make no useful contribution. It seems to me that any invasion of Belgium, Holland or Sweden must be preceded and caused by some strong sympathizing movement from the inside. We cannot foresee the extent of such a movement in either case; or its effect on English opinion here. Into whose hands under such circumstances the direc-

longer academic, and automatically the British went on to consider the possibility of sending an expeditionary force to the Continent, not, as Fisher had wished, as a small part of a strategical plan still mainly naval, but to fight beside Continental armies. Clarke now suggested that the General Staff should be asked to answer three questions:

I. In the event of a Franco-German war, would there be a strong inducement for either of the belligerents to violate the neutrality of Belgium?

II. In the case of such a violation, would the Belgian Army be able to offer any effective resistance by holding the defences of Namur and Liége?

III. In what time from the order to mobilize could two British Army Corps be disembarked in Belgium?[1]

Clarke referred these questions to the Prime Minister, who authorised them on 14 September with the comment that their formulation was 'excellent' and that it was 'important that the General Staff should prepare a memorandum on the subject'.[2]

These decisions had been made not because the government was naturally alive to the dangers in Europe but because its investigations had acquired a momentum of their own and driven it to reach conclusions foreign to its accustomed way of thinking. Its main preoccupation continued to be with events in the Far East. The international scene during July and August was dominated by the peace negotiations between Russia and Japan and by the Kaiser's attempt to use Russia's disappointment and humiliation to build up a Continental coalition against the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. Lansdowne continued to follow the same confident single-minded policy—to cultivate the Japanese and support them unswervingly. It is true that, so far as he could without giving up this guiding principle, he tried to keep in line with the French in Morocco. He discouraged an advance from Spain aimed at creating a close Anglo-Spanish understanding to the exclusion of France. 'If she were to cut herself adrift from France', he told Nicolson, 'she would to some extent separate herself from us also.'[3] He helped the French in their Moroccan negotiations,

tion of English policy will fall it is idle to speculate, but Treaty obligations will follow our national inclinations and will not precede them. Remember the fate in 1877 of the tripartite guarantee of Turkey signed in 1856 by Austria, France and England.'

[1] Quoted in memo by General Staff, 29 Sept. 1905. C.I.D. Records, Cab. 4/1, Paper 65B.

[2] Sydenham, *My Working Life*, p. 186.

[3] Lansdowne to Nicolson, 18 July 1905. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xxvi.

accepted an international conference on 12 July when they did,[1] and supported them in their insistence that the conference should meet not in Morocco but in Spain.[2] But this was all; there was no real intimacy. In September, writing to Bertie, he once again rejected the idea of any closer connection. 'The instability of French Governments is much to be regretted and affords an argument to those who do not believe in the possibility of an enduring understanding with France. The machine worked (or seemed to work) so smoothly while it was run by Delcassé or Cambon that one was apt to forget this danger.'[3] Above all, he had no contact at all with the French over the Far East, the dominating question in diplomacy. He never even discussed it with them, and never consulted their interests there. This was because although they wanted the war to come to an end as quickly as possible, the Japanese, who were now more important to Lansdowne, would not hear of any form of mediation. Lansdowne continued to remain in the background, giving his ally unqualified support in spite of the precarious character of the peace negotiations and the growing danger of a Russo-German alliance. Roosevelt had induced the two belligerents to attend a peace conference in the United States; but it was always extremely doubtful, right up to the last moment, whether the conference would succeed, and its final agreement was quite unexpected. As soon as Russia's acceptance of the conference was announced Hardinge telegraphed that she was acting in bad faith and only taking part so that she could learn the Japanese terms and then denounce them.[4] The Czar continued to waver between peace and war, and he appointed first Muravieff, a leader of the war party, and then Witte, leader of the peace party, as chief Russian delegate to the peace conference.[5] Breakdown of the negotiations was one danger arising out of Japanese firmness; the other was, as Delcassé had warned, a Russo-German alliance. The Kaiser also saw his opportunity, and on 24 July he arranged a surprise meeting with the Czar at Björkö, a remote spot in the Gulf of Bothnia, and persuaded him to sign an alliance between their two countries. The Czar also promised to obtain the adhesion of France to the

[1] B.D. III.152. [2] B.D. III.152, 163.
[3] Lansdowne to Bertie, 12 Sept. 1905. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xi.
[4] Hardinge to Lansdowne, telegram No. 95, 11 June 1905. F.O. 65/1706.
[5] Hardinge to Lansdowne, despatches Nos. 423, 443, 4 July, 15 July 1905. F.O. 65/1701.

alliance, and for a time the creation of a Continental coalition against the Anglo-Japanese Alliance came within sight. To conciliate the French, the Kaiser gave way to them about the arrangements for a Moroccan conference and agreed that it should be held at Algeciras in Spain with an agenda settled in advance.[1] Although the British were not at first aware of the significance of the Björkö meeting,[2] their suspicions soon grew. By 1 August Hardinge, admitting that he still had no definite information, was telling Lansdowne of a report in St Petersburg that the Kaiser had encouraged the Czar to continue the war. He spoke also of anti-British activities by the Germans. 'As Bompard remarked, the one preoccupation of Germany here is to prevent us ever having a friendly understanding with Russia, to prevent which no effort will be spared by Germany, and it would be prudent to forestall the creation of any such misunderstanding.'[3] On 3 August he added that he had learnt from Bompard that the two Emperors had discussed Morocco and that the Czar had agreed it would not be in Russia's interest to join an Anglo-French combination.[4]

Even if the true significance of Björkö only slowly became apparent, Lansdowne had known since the summer of 1904 of the Kaiser's efforts to effect a Russo-German *rapprochement* at the expense of Britain. Britain's position in Europe at that time was profoundly unsatisfactory. Germany was a rival; Russia was humiliated and resentful; France, since Delcassé's fall, was unreliable. But at sea and in Asia it was stronger than it had been for many years, and Lansdowne therefore retreated not an inch before the threat of the European coalition. The Japanese negotiations had not, during July, gone smoothly. Britain was reluctant to give Japan as free a hand in Korea as she wished, and Japan was unwilling to extend her obligations beyond India to the territories 'in proximity to India', as the British insisted.[5] Now, at the end of July, as the danger from Europe reached its peak, Lansdowne determined to break the deadlock in the negotiations. There was only one obstacle which might have deterred him from closing with the Japanese: fear of American opposition. Relations with the United States were, in fact, no longer as intimate as they had been earlier

[1] B.D. III.178, 184.
[2] Hardinge to Lansdowne, despatch No. 474, 25 July 1905. F.O. 65/1701.
[3] Hardinge to Lansdowne, 1 Aug. 1905. Hardinge MSS, vol. vi.
[4] B.D. III.168.
[5] B.D. IV.128–43 and pp. 165–9.

in the year: Roosevelt was uneasy at the increase in Japanese power and was angry at Britain's refusal to help him in the peace negotiations. Lansdowne knew that the President regretted his unwillingness to bring pressure on Japan, but he never realised the full extent of his displeasure. This was because Roosevelt only revealed his opinions to his friend Spring-Rice, and not to Durand, who was uncongenial to him, and Lansdowne believed Durand.[1] But before he broke the deadlock in the Japanese negotiations by giving way over Korea, Lansdowne decided to make quite sure of American approval. On 28 and 29 July he revealed his intentions to Loomis, the Assistant Secretary of State, and Lodge, the President's special adviser, who were then in London, and was assured by both of them that the United States would have no objection to the establishment of Japanese preponderance in Korea.[2] The only possible obstacle was now removed, and on 3 August Lansdowne gave way to the Japanese demands.[3] Next day Roosevelt gave his general blessing to the Alliance. 'The views of the American Government regarding East Asia were entirely in accordance with the views of England and Japan.' He even told Durand once again that he was satisfied with the British attitude to the peace negotiations.[4] The remaining difficulties were quickly disposed of. On the 8th Japan made a concession of her own bringing the territories in proximity to India within the scope of the Alliance,[5] and on the 12th the treaty was finally signed. The decision was made not to publish it for the moment, although the Russians had long been aware of the negotiations.[6] The Anglo-Japanese Alliance, flanked by America, was Britain's reply to the projected Continental coalition.

During the next few days Lansdowne received more definite

[1] On 13 June Roosevelt told Durand that Lansdowne's refusal to mediate was 'wise and proper' (Durand to Lansdowne, telegram No. 65, 16 June 1905. F.O. 5/2581); but he had at the same time written a letter of complaint to Spring-Rice (Gwynn, *Spring-Rice*, vol. i, pp. 472–4). This letter was passed on to Lansdowne, but he told Balfour that 'from Durand's reports I doubt whether the President is very deeply convinced that we are obstructing the peace negotiations' (minute, Lansdowne to Balfour, 9 July 1905. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xxxii).

[2] Lansdowne to Durand, despatch No. 195A, 31 July 1905. F.O. 46/673.

[3] B.D. IV.150.

[4] Durand to Lansdowne, 4 Aug. 1905. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xxviii. Durand to Lansdowne, telegram, 4 Aug. 1905. Ibid., vol. xxviii.

[5] B.D. IV.151.

[6] B.D. IV.151, 155. Lansdowne to Hardinge, despatch No. 180, 2 June 1905. F.O. 65/1697.

news of the transactions at Björkö. The Minister at Munich, who had connections in the German court, told him on the 13th that since his meeting with the Czar the Kaiser had been talking enthusiastically and hopefully of a Franco-Russo-German coalition against Britain.[1] Lansdowne replied that this news of the Kaiser's activities 'fills me with disquiet. What may not a man in such a frame of mind do next?'[2] Hardinge again warned him on the 16th that 'the French will naturally do all they can to help realise an Anglo-Russian Agreement which the Germans will, on the other hand, do all in their power to prevent'.[3] But even though all these dangers were aggravated by a sudden disagreement at the peace conference, and the threat of a prolongation of the war, Lansdowne refused to bring pressure on Japan. The disagreement was caused by Japan's demand for an indemnity, which Hardinge warned Lansdowne on the 25th would make a settlement impossible if it were pressed.[4] But Lansdowne did nothing. Even a direct appeal from Roosevelt, through Durand, failed to move him. 'Our advice', he minuted, 'would not be taken and would be resented.'[5] It was only because Roosevelt himself then proceeded to bring heavy pressure on Japan to give up her demands that agreement was reached, suddenly and unexpectedly, on 29 August. Although Japan had to surrender her more extreme demands, the peace, by ceding to her the lease of Port Arthur and recognising her exclusive control over Korea, imposed a decisive check on Russia's Far Eastern ambitions. The Peace of Portsmouth was then formally signed on 5 September. The new Japanese Alliance was then communicated to the Powers, and published on 27 September.

4

Meanwhile the final break between Curzon and the Cabinet had come at last. By early 1905 it was no longer possible to conceal the complete disagreement between them on Indian foreign policy. In January, after three years of fruitless negotiations with the new Ameer, Sir Louis Dane, the Foreign Secretary of the Government of India, was sent to Kabul in a last effort to reach agreement on a revised Anglo-Afghan Treaty. Habibullah refused to engage him-

[1] Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 338. [2] Ibid.
[3] Hardinge to Lansdowne, 16 Aug. 1905. Hardinge MSS, vol. vi.
[4] Hardinge to Lansdowne, telegram No. 153, 25 Aug. 1905. F.O. 65/1706.
[5] B.D. IV.97.

self further than his father had done, and would offer no more than a renewal of the old arrangements. Curzon had already insisted that these should be revised to give the British greater control over Afghan policy, and he now advised that Dane should be withdrawn and the Ameer coerced. The Cabinet was not, however, prepared to accept the risks involved in this course. Balfour had already decided that Britain should withdraw from her obligations in Afghanistan, and, according to Brodrick, 'the whole of the India Council . . . and the whole of the Cabinet' united in opposition to Curzon's policy.[1] The Viceroy was overruled, and on 21 March Dane signed a Treaty simply renewing Abdurrahman's arrangements.[2]

From now on, relations between London and Calcutta were marked by an animosity and distrust which neither side attempted to conceal. When, in August, Curzon impulsively offered his resignation during the dispute with Kitchener over military administration, the Cabinet was glad to escape from an impossible situation by accepting it. Although it was the military controversy which occasioned the break, it was the antagonism and resentment accumulated over the years which really caused it; and disagreement over foreign policy had played the major part in creating this atmosphere. In Balfour's view the government at home was at last re-asserting its authority over the Government of India. 'To allow a Viceroy to run his own foreign policy in those regions, irrespective of the foreign policy of the home Government, would be to copy the blunder which has brought Russia to disaster and humiliation—the blunder, namely, of having one Foreign Minister in the Far East, and another at home, not necessarily acting in accord.'[3] Salisbury had once complained that Curzon always expected him to act as if he had five hundred thousand men at his back[4]; and the criticism was a just one. Curzon's policy, if it can be called a policy, was one of indiscriminate advance, everywhere and at all times; and he could never be made to recognise that the wider international situation limited Britain's freedom of movement. When the Cabinet overruled him for this reason he denounced it at length for political incapacity and personal disloyalty.

[1] Brodrick to Ampthill, 17 March 1905. Ampthill MSS, vol. xi.
[2] Cp. Ronaldshay, *Lord Curzon*, vol. ii, pp. 365–8.
[3] Memo by Balfour, 6 Sept. 1905. C.I.D. Records, Cab. 1/6.
[4] Ronaldshay, op. cit., vol. ii, p. 206.

Curzon's departure facilitated the renewed search for an agreement with Russia. The British had not lost sight of the need for such an agreement after the outbreak of the war, and in the summer of 1904 Lansdowne, Hardinge, and the King had all re-affirmed their desire for it. This desire had survived the Japanese victories, and on 30 May Lamsdorff and Hardinge agreed that negotiations should be re-opened when the war came to an end.[1] But so unexpected and portentous an event as Russia's complete defeat at the hands of Japan inevitably transformed Britain's attitude towards both Powers. In 1905 as in 1903 and in 1901 she sought to achieve both a Russian settlement and a Japanese alliance; but whereas then the former had had priority, now it was the latter. All during the summer, while the alliance was being negotiated, Britain had done nothing to cultivate the Russians. Austen Chamberlain summarised British policy when he wrote to Lansdowne in October:

> I am all for cultivating better relations with Russia, whenever possible, but *not at the expense of any coolness with Japan*. It would be fatal to attempt to reassure Russia by any steps which awakened distrust in Japan. Let us make new friends if we can but above all let us keep old ones![2]

Nothing could, therefore, be done to approach Russia until the alliance was made and the peace signed. But as soon as these events had taken place Lansdowne sent a message to Lamsdorff assuring him that the Alliance 'must not be taken as an indication of unfriendliness on our part', and that it was his desire to 'live on neighbourly terms with Russia . . . [and] work with her for the good of the civilised world'.[3] He informed Cambon also of his wish for friendship with the Russians.[4] But there was little feeling of enthusiasm or urgency in London. Lansdowne told Cromer on 10 September that he hoped to reach a *modus vivendi* with the Russians but that

> anything like a definite agreement of a contractual character will be extremely hard to arrive at, partly on account of difficulties which are inherent, partly because the Russian statesmen would, I believe, not be

[1] B.D. IV.189.
[2] A. Chamberlain to Lansdowne, 29 Oct. 1905. A. Chamberlain MSS, Box AC 17, Package 58. Chamberlain's own underlining.
[3] Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, pp. 327–8.
[4] Lansdowne to Cambon, 4 Sept. 1905. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xi.

allowed to accept the conditions upon which we should have to insist, e.g. in regard to Afghanistan and Persia.[1]

Sanderson too was sceptical, as he had always been, about the prospects of agreement.

> Their idea of an agreement with us has always been that they should have everything they wanted with our assistance, or at our expense, and that we should be content with anything we could get out of the remainder. When next we begin a deal with them we may hope that they will be more reasonable. But the problem in the future is whether under new conditions their policy will lose its predominating character of military aggression, and it will be some time before any change in this respect can show itself clearly.[2]

Hardinge, on the other hand, advocated an entente with great vigour. When on 26 September Hartwig, Lamsdorff's closest official subordinate, spoke to him of his desire for one, Hardinge at once advised acceptance of the overture. His principal object was to forestall the Germans. 'There is no doubt', he told Knollys, 'that the Kaiser is conducting a very active campaign of which the objects are to weaken the Franco-Russian alliance and to prevent any sort of friendly "rapprochement" with England.'[3] Bertie agreed with Hardinge, and spoke with brutal frankness of his desire to encircle Germany. '[The French] *idée fixe* is to be the means of bringing about an understanding between England and Russia. That was Delcassé's policy. If it could be effected German Bill might amuse himself as much as he liked within his own German ring. He could hurt nobody.'[4] Austen Chamberlain took much the same view. He advised Lansdowne to base his Russian negotiations on the Near East where Japan had no interest but where Russian and German interests clashed. 'If we two were agreed,' said Chamberlain, 'the German eagle's claws would be clipped—perhaps his wings too!'[5]

Negotiations with Russia were pursued in competition with Germany and therefore inevitably had an anti-German element in

[1] Lansdowne to Cromer, 10 Sept. 1905. Ibid., vol. viii.
[2] Sanderson to Hardinge, 19 Sept. 1905. Hardinge MSS, vol. vii.
[3] Hardinge to Knollys (and a similar letter to Sanderson), 27 Sept. 1905. Ibid., vol. vi.
[4] Bertie to Hardinge, 25 Sept. 1905. Bertie MSS, Series A.
[5] A. Chamberlain to Lansdowne, 29 Oct. 1905. A. Chamberlain MSS, Box AC 17, Package 58.

them. But it is unlikely that Lansdowne saw them, like Bertie, as part of an overall plan to encircle the Germans. He took a calm view of relations with Germany,[1] and he showed no enthusiasm for discussions with Russia. When at the beginning of October Benckendorff made an official overture, Lansdowne agreed to join him in negotiations but warned that 'it would be a mistake to attempt too much, or to allow it to be understood that the two countries were on the eve of a comprehensive transaction analogous to that which had taken place between France and Great Britain'.[2] The Russians were just as doubtful. Both Lamsdorff and Benckendorff were cautious, speaking of the bad effect in Russia of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance and advising against any attempt at a comprehensive discussion of differences.[3]

It was not a promising start. The British did, however, get as far as the start of a discussion of the terms they would demand. Since 1903 their policy in Central Asia had been radically revised under the impact of Balfour's new strategic ideas. In March 1905 the Committee of Imperial Defence, with Lansdowne present, had decided that it should be Britain's object in Persia to maintain the status quo and preserve her influence at Tehran.[4] Britain had gone back to her old policy of supporting Persia as a buffer state. These ideas dominated what discussion there was in the autumn of 1905 of the terms Britain would expect from Russia. On 12 October Balfour told Clarke that the time was now propitious for an agreement, and asked him to draw up a draft.[5] Clarke's proposals reflected Balfour's own ideas of Central Asian strategy. In contrast to Lansdowne's draft of 1903, they made no reference to a partition of Persia or to the need for Russian acknowledgment that Tibet and Afghanistan were inside the British sphere, but concentrated instead on maintaining the neutrality, and therefore the 'non-conducting' quality, of all three countries.[6] But this draft had no

[1] See pp. 222–32. [2] B.D. IV.194. [3] B.D. IV.194, 195.

[4] Minutes of 67th meeting of C.I.D., 22 March 1905. C.I.D. Records, Cab. 2/1.

[5] Sydenham, *My Working Life*, p. 182. Clarke himself had reached this conclusion on 1 September. To Esher, Esher MSS, Sir George Clarke.

[6] Memo by Clarke, Sydenham MSS. In Afghanistan the two Powers were to agree not to restrict each other's commercial access; not to maintain representatives; not to extend their railways towards the country for ten years; to communicate with each other if internal disturbances made the use of force necessary; and to retire within their own borders when peace was restored. In Persia they were to confer with each other if the Shah's government needed money, and neither was to object to the commercial access of the other to Persian territory. Britain, recognising Russia's desire

results. It was sent to the Foreign Office; but Lansdowne made no comment, and Sanderson pointed out that the policy of making Afghanistan a neutral zone had been rejected as impracticable forty years before, and its revival would meet with strong opposition from the Government of India.[1] Hardinge declined to give a definite opinion.[2]

Meanwhile the negotiations themselves had failed to make headway. There was still no sense of urgency in London, in spite of the intensity of the German effort to cultivate Russia. On 4 October Bompard told Hardinge that Witte was now 'absolutely German in his sympathies' and confessed that his government was alarmed at the possibility of a Russo-German combination directed against Britain. Twice he advised that Britain should forestall the Germans by making an agreement of her own with Russia.[3] Hardinge, who had always believed in the reality of the German danger, shared these apprehensions, and on 8 October advised Lansdowne to overcome Russian fears about the new alliance by a joint Anglo-Japanese declaration that its object was the preservation of the status quo and commercial liberty throughout Asia. He also suggested that political discussions could be forwarded by combining them with the negotiations for a Russian loan then proceeding in private financial circles in London.[4] But the government did not share Hardinge's sense of urgency. Sanderson could detect in Persia none of the friendliness which the Russians had promised.[5] Lansdowne rejected Hardinge's two proposals, the first because Japan 'would regard it with no little suspicion'.[6] 'I think we must mark time', he told Hardinge on the 17th, 'and content ourselves with reminding the Russians here and at St Petersburg that we are quite ready to talk to them whenever they feel inclined.'[7]

This was even before the arrival on 19 October of news that the

for commercial access to the Gulf, would offer no opposition to the building of a railway through Khanikin to Baghdad; but with this exception neither Power was to seek any concession in Persia for ten years. Britain and Russia were to abstain from intervention in the internal affairs of Tibet, and if disorder occurred they were to call jointly on China to restore peace; neither was to maintain a representative at Lhasa or to seek concessions in Tibet. Britain was also to withdraw opposition to the opening of the Dardenelles to ships of war of all classes.

[1] Sanderson to Clarke, 10 Nov. 1905. C.I.D. Records, Cab. 17/60.
[2] Hardinge to Clarke, 16 Nov. 1905. Ibid.
[3] B.D. IV.195, 197.
[4] B.D. IV.197.
[5] Sanderson to Hardinge, 3 Oct. 1905. Hardinge MSS, vol. vii.
[6] B.D. IV.197, and minutes.
[7] Lansdowne to Hardinge, 17 Oct. 1905. Hardinge MSS, vol. vii.

German attempt to establish an alliance with Russia had failed.[1] After that there was even less need for haste, and Lansdowne remained content to 'mark time'. Partly this was a matter of tactics: Cambon advised him on 17 October to wait until Russia had recovered from the shock of the new Japanese Alliance.[2] And he continued to make the Russians aware of his friendly intentions: when on 20 October Hardinge, who was about to see the Czar, asked if there was any message he should give, Lansdowne replied that he could not 'dwell too strongly upon our desire to maintain friendly relations with Russia'.[3] But partly too this lack of urgency resulted from the feeling that a Russian entente, though desirable, was no longer worth great effort. Japan still had to come first. Just as Lansdowne had rejected Hardinge's proposals of 8 October for soothing Russian fears of Japan, so he rejected another suggestion on 25 October by Cambon that Russia could be reassured if Britain and France kept their Ministers in Korea, so recognising it to at least some degree as an independent state.[4] It was this proposal which drew from Austen Chamberlain the letter in which he urged Lansdowne to put Japanese friendship before Russian. Lansdowne replied on 31 October: 'I agree with you that we should above all consider the wishes of Japan.'[5] He maintained this attitude although the Russian Ambassador announced on 6 November that his government would regard the withdrawal of foreign representatives from Seoul as unfortunate[6]; and when the Japanese government requested the removal of the British Minister he told France and Russia, on 29 November, as one of his last official acts, that he was complying with their wishes.[7] The Japanese Alliance continued to provide the essential framework of his policy in Asia, and, since he was not driven to a Russian entente by overwhelming fear of the dangers from Germany in Europe, it imposed in the way of agreement with Russia an obstacle which it was not easy to overcome. The attitude of detachment and confidence induced in

[1] Hardinge to Lansdowne, telegram No. 198, 19 Oct. 1905. F.O. 65/1706.
[2] B.D. IV.199.
[3] Hardinge to Lansdowne, 20 Oct. 1905, and minutes by Lansdowne. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xxv.
[4] B.D. IV.203.
[5] Lansdowne to A. Chamberlain, 31 Oct. 1905. A. Chamberlain MSS, Box AC 17, Package 58.
[6] Lansdowne to Hardinge, despatch No. 363, 6 Nov. 1905. F.O. 65/1697.
[7] Lansdowne to MacDonald, telegram No. 150, 29 Nov. 1905, and telegram No. 152, 1 Dec. 1905. F.O. 46/594.

him by the Japanese victories had survived even the onset of the Moroccan crisis.

Something of this was apparent even in relations with Germany. Of course it was inevitable in the second half of 1905 that Germany should be regarded as Britain's main rival and that the possibility of war with her should be discussed; but Lansdowne did not regard this rivalry as a fundamental or unalterable feature of Britain's international relations.

It was only with regret that he continued to hold aloof from the Baghdad Railway. In November 1904 the General Staff had repeated that if Britain had a substantial share in the railway, and especially in its Persian Gulf end, it 'would not, as far as can be foreseen, exercise any detrimental effect, from a military point of view, either on our relations with Persia or the defence of India'. If Britain stood aloof she could delay, but not prevent, the construction of the line; and it would then be exclusively German, and an instrument of German expansion.[1] Then in May 1905 O'Conor reported that the Germans were likely to raise the question again, and this time offer Britain control of the Baghdad–Basra section in return for a similar concession in Asia Minor. He asked Lansdowne how he should react to any such proposal.[2] 'It seems to me', wrote Lansdowne, 'that we should lose no time in taking the matter up'; the present proposals were very different from those put forward in 1903 for a completely international line, and in many ways much better.[3] On the 23rd he went to the Cabinet, who decided that, although British participation would be 'exceedingly unpopular', the new plan would have 'many of the advantages and few of the disadvantages attending a scheme of co-operation extending over the whole line'. They therefore accepted a draft letter from Lansdowne to O'Conor which instructed him, 'without taking too much apparent interest in the project', to make informal soundings.[4] But he added a significant warning:

[1] Memo by General Staff, 16 Nov. 1904. C.I.D. Records, Cab. 4/1, Paper 45B.
[2] O'Conor to Lansdowne, 10 May 1905. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xxvii.
[3] Memo by Lansdowne, 18 May 1905. F.O. 78/5449.
[4] Balfour to the King, 23 May 1905. Royal Archives, R26. Lansdowne told O'Conor that 'the C.I.D. think we should participate' and (in a sentence later deleted) that 'the Prime Minister, I know, holds this view strongly'. Lansdowne to O'Conor, 23 May 1905. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xxvii. In June the Board of Trade sent a memo advising participation if Britain could obtain control of the Gulf end. Memo by Llewellyn Smith, 6 June 1905. F.O. 78/5449.

Pray remember that any proposal involving cooperation with Germany will be regarded with the utmost suspicion in many quarters here. If, therefore, an arrangement is to be come to, I should like to be able to show that it really has the effect of placing an obstacle in the way of the attempt of the German government to obtain an exclusive hold upon Asia Minor.[1]

Fear of the reaction of public opinion lay at the back of Lansdowne's mind all through the summer and increased as the obstacles in his way multiplied. First he approached Cambon, telling him on 19 July that 'the matter was one which we should not like to deal with without previous consultation with the French Government'; but Cambon opposed the division of the line into sections of national control, as the British wanted.[2] Clarke thought that Britain should insist and that France, in view of the cordial relations between the two countries, would then give way.[3] Austen Chamberlain, on the other hand, was against any form of co-operation with Germany.

It appears to me I confess that the moment is ill-chosen for taking any steps towards co-operation with Germany in any enterprise. I should say that the suspicion of Germany in the public mind was never stronger than at present—or with reason after the recent proceedings. And I believe that we could not do a more unpopular thing in England at this moment than to enter a joint enterprise with Berlin.

I imagine that the effect in France would also be bad and that such action would be unacceptable to Russia.[4]

The Cabinet, with uneasy memories of 1903, could not face the opposition which co-operation with Germany would have encountered. On 1 August they decided that 'such co-operation would be exceedingly unpopular in the present state of public opinion—would indeed be almost impossible unless France, and perhaps America also, could be induced to take part in the undertaking', although even now they thought it would be 'inadvisable to shut the door absolutely against any arrangement'.[5] Privately Lansdowne regretted the need to bow to public opinion. 'After all that has happened we shall have to be extremely careful

[1] Lansdowne to O'Conor, 23 May 1905. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xxvii.
[2] B.D. VI.212. [3] Memo by Clarke, 31 July 1905. F.O. 78/5449.
[4] A. Chamberlain to Balfour, 28 July 1905. Balfour MSS, Add. MSS 49735.
[5] Balfour to the King, 1 Aug. 1905. Royal Archives, R26.

in dealing with a subject which is very imperfectly understood by the public and in which, nevertheless, the public takes an almost morbid interest.'[1]

To all the other causes of conflict between Britain and Germany, there was suddenly added in August a violent personal quarrel between Edward VII and William II.[2] Lansdowne regarded the King's hostility to the Kaiser with the same irritation, and almost contempt, that he felt for popular Germanophobia. Even before this particular dispute he had told Balfour that the King had 'got the German Emperor on the brain and I am afraid that his constant abuse of H.I.M. is doing a great deal of harm'.[3] His reaction was all the stronger because the affair happened to coincide with a difference with the King over the attitude to be adopted towards the candidature of Prince Charles of Denmark to the throne of Norway. Lansdowne looked upon this candidature with sympathy but was not prepared to go further; the King, on the other hand, sent telegrams to Prince Charles promising British support. 'He got altogether off the rails', wrote Lansdowne,[4] who also thought that 'he ought not to be allowed to travel without a minister in attendance'.[5] Already irritated by this episode, Lansdowne regarded the King's quarrel with the Kaiser only with impatience. 'These Royal "pies" are very indigestible and we shall have another over the row which is just beginning between the King and his Imperial nephew. It will not surprise me if Metternich comes some morning with his mouth on one side to say that his Master has recalled him.'[6] Accordingly he told Lascelles frankly

[1] Lansdowne to Drummond Wolff, 7 Sept. 1905. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xxix.

[2] The King had refused to meet the Kaiser during his Continental holiday, and in retaliation the Kaiser had caused the German Crown Prince to refuse an invitation to Windsor. This refusal enraged the King, who replied to the Crown Prince on 5 September that 'another year it will probably be the same story as I have reason to believe that your father does not like your coming to England' (enclosure in Ponsonby to Lascelles, 5 Sept. 1905. Lascelles MSS, vol. iii, Part 4). This reply infuriated the Kaiser in turn: he told Lascelles that it 'amounted almost to a personal insult' and complained bitterly of a long series of snubs he had received from his uncle (Lascelles to Lansdowne, 9 Sept. 1905. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xiv). The King thought the Kaiser's tone was 'totally uncalled for' and one of 'peevish complaint'. 'The real fact', he believed, 'is that he was jealous of his son being asked at all' (Knollys to Lascelles, 23 Sept. 1905. Lascelles MSS, vol. iii, Part 4).

[3] Lansdowne to Balfour, 23 Aug. 1905. Balfour MSS, Add. MSS 49729.

[4] Lansdowne to Sanderson, 12 Sept. 1905. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xxxii.

[5] Lansdowne to Balfour, 28 Aug. 1905. Balfour MSS, Add. MSS 49729. Pressure from Lansdowne induced the King to give way on this point. Lansdowne to Balfour, 22 Sept. 1905. Ibid.

[6] Lansdowne to Sanderson, 12 Sept. 1905. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xxxii.

that 'between ourselves I fear the King is responsible for much of the trouble',[1] and it was probably as a result of his pressure that the Kaiser was told that, if relations between the two countries improved, the King would meet him in the following year.[2]

This was not the most important result of the incident. On 27 October Lascelles saw Holstein, who expressed the desire for a better understanding between Britain and Germany, to be prepared by a personal meeting between the two rulers.[3] Lansdowne's reply, sent on the 31st, is interesting.

> The account of your conversation with Holstein is important and I will, in accordance with your suggestion, say nothing about it to the King at present. When you arrive in London we can consider what steps should be taken in order to make H.M. aware of Holstein's views. I feel sure that any attempt to bring about a better understanding by means of effusive compliments or theatrical reconciliations would be a mistake: such proceedings would not create a change in the prevalent opinion here, which is deep-seated, and would on the other hand frighten the French and that part of the British public which sees through French spectacles.[4]

Lansdowne's reference to 'prevalent opinion' is characteristic, and his slighting description of 'that part of the British public which sees through French spectacles' speaks volumes for his cool and detached attitude towards the German problem. And this correspondence coincided with a remarkable speech by Brodrick at Guildford on 26 October. Taking as his text a recent attack by Rosebery on the French entente for leading to 'bitter animosity' with Germany, he declared without qualification that 'there was no outstanding question of any description between the two Governments, that there was nothing which should raise animosity between them, and that there was nothing which stood between them and friendship. . . . A good understanding with our neighbours was necessary and desirable, whatever language they spoke.'[5] Brodrick told Lascelles that he had consulted Lansdowne and Balfour before making this speech, and that he hoped they would take the same line. 'I quite feel with you', he added, 'that time only can

[1] Lansdowne to Lascelles, 25 Sept. 1905. Ibid., vol. xiv.
[2] Knollys to Lascelles, 2 Oct. 1905. Lascelles MSS, vol. iii, Part 4.
[3] Lascelles to Lansdowne, 27 Oct. 1905. Lansdowne MSS, vol. xiv.
[4] Lansdowne to Lascelles, 31 Oct. 1905. Ibid.
[5] *The Times*, 27 Oct. 1905, p. 4.

help us and we must wait an opportunity of establishing better relations with Germany. But the press, especially the "Times" have a great deal to answer for. It seems so very deplorable that two nations, who have no real cause of quarrel, should have such bitter feelings.'[1]

Brodrick's view was shared by at least one other member of the Cabinet. This was Salisbury, now President of the Board of Trade, who had had doubts about the French entente, and now thought even Lansdowne too pro-French. Asked by the Prime Minister for advice on foreign affairs, he replied on 9 November:

> Circumstances no doubt have driven us in respect to France further than we intended . . . and although I recognise that in certain eventualities our diplomatic understanding with France might develop into a military alliance yet I should regret that and avoid it as long as I could . . . I think it very doubtful policy to drive Germany into the conviction that we are so absolutely estranged from her, and so consolidated with France, that nothing is to be gained by seeking our goodwill. Her irritation and indifference to our susceptibilities, of which the Portuguese affair [Madeira] is only one symptom, is a great misfortune. Moreover, I am not quite sure that France will behave with absolute propriety if she thinks that we are committed beyond reach.[2]

Lansdowne had to face one more crisis with Germany before he left office. In 1903 a German syndicate had been formed to acquire land on the Portuguese island of Madeira in order to build sanatoria there. It was a small affair in itself, but there were British subjects likely to be expropriated if the land concession were granted; and, in the prevailing atmosphere of suspicion, there steadily grew up a conviction that what the Germans were in fact aiming at was the establishment of a naval base on the island. The dangers were obvious. If Portugal gave way British interests would, presumably, be endangered; if she resisted and then appealed to her ancient treaties with Britain an Anglo-German collision might take place. Lansdowne, however, remained cool and refrained from taking a decided attitude. When on 20 October the Germans demanded instant compliance with their wishes and

[1] Brodrick to Lascelles, 1 Nov. 1905. Lascelles MSS, vol. iii, Part 4. Brodrick was always friendly to Germany. Like Rosebery, he disliked the French entente because of the effect it would have on Germany; and in 1906 Mallet described how he had wished to press France to be more conciliatory to Germany. Memo by Mallet, 26 June 1906. Grey MSS, vol. liii.

[2] Salisbury to Balfour, 9 November 1905. Balfour MSS, Add. MSS 49758.

Portugal turned to Britain, Lansdowne would do no more than advise arbitration. 'We must proceed very carefully', he minuted on the 22nd, '[for] if Germany by any chance really *does* want to fasten a quarrel upon us, this is precisely the sort of opportunity of which she might take advantage.' He was not even sure that a German base on the island would be against British interests. 'Have we any knowledge of the views of the Admiralty as to the importance of excluding German influence from Madeira? Would it matter to us whether Germany had a coaling station at Madeira or not?'[1] Writing to Balfour next day, he described Britain's treaty commitments to Portugal as an 'awkward liability'. He even thought of doing no more than to tell the Portuguese that if any British subjects were expropriated Britain would demand a heavy indemnity and then 'let them, with the fear of this liability before their eyes, make the best terms that they can with the German government'.[2] When on 23 October the German Minister at Lisbon delivered what the Portuguese called the 'dangerous threat' that failure to comply would affect Germany's good will towards Portugal, the King minuted that this was 'political blackmailing and bluffing as usual', but Lansdowne simply commented: 'I do not see why this obscure threat need greatly perturb the Portuguese Government.'[3]

But as German pressure mounted it became less and less easy to maintain this attitude. When the German chargé d'affaires delivered what was practically an ultimatum on 3 November, threatening to leave Lisbon on the 5th if his demands were not accepted, the Portuguese demanded a definite promise of support from Britain.[4] After a temporising answer had failed to satisfy them,[5] Lansdowne did prepare a draft promising that if Germany tried to coerce Portugal, she could 'rely on our fulfilling our Treaty obligations'.[6] The fate of this telegram is uncertain. It was never sent; perhaps it was rejected by the Cabinet or by

[1] De Bunsen to Lansdowne, commercial telegram No. 11, 20 Oct. 1905, and minute by Lansdowne, 22 Oct. 1905. F.O. 63/1443.
[2] Minute by Lansdowne for Balfour, 23 Oct. 1905. Ibid.
[3] De Bunsen to Lansdowne, commercial telegram No. 12, and minutes by the King and Lansdowne, 23 Oct. 1905. Ibid.
[4] De Bunsen to Lansdowne, commercial telegram No. 16, 3 Nov. 1905. F.O. 97/616.
[5] Lansdowne to de Bunsen, commercial telegram No. 10, 4 Nov. 1905, and minute by Gorst. Ibid.
[6] Draft telegram by Lansdowne. Ibid.

Lansdowne himself on closer consideration.[1] Instead, the Portuguese were asked to define their demands more precisely.[2] But then, before any further action was necessary, the Germans, on 8 November, suddenly climbed down and the crisis receded. The German chargé remained at Lisbon and denied that he had even delivered an ultimatum.[3] 'In these circumstances', declared Lansdowne on the 10th, 'I do not see that we are called upon to make any further announcement to the Portuguese Government as to the extent of the support which they might or might not receive from His Majesty's Government.' At the same time, Lascelles was instructed not to take the initiative in mentioning the subject at Berlin.[4] The last great crisis with Germany while Lansdowne was at the Foreign Office had shown that he was still ready, if it was absolutely necessary, to go to extreme lengths against her; but also that he was anxious to avoid a break and, above all, that he still approached relations with her with an open mind.

Meanwhile, the discussions of the possibilities of war with Germany which had been initiated in the spring were going forward, but slowly and inconclusively. The sub-committee on offensive expeditions overseas had still not met by October: it was on the 10th of that month that Fisher wrote his memorandum as guidance for 'our coming labours'.[5] It is unlikely that it ever met. Lord Hankey tells us definitely that it did not,[6] and certainly nothing had been decided in December; indeed the discussions of that month suggest that there had been no systematic thinking at all about the problems of a German war.[7]

[1] There is no doubt that it was never sent: on the 11th or later Dufferin (who was in charge of the Madeira case) minuted that no definite instructions had yet been sent to de Bunsen (minute on de Bunsen to Lansdowne, despatch No. 106, 6 Nov. 1905. Ibid.); and Lansdowne too implied this in his Cabinet memorandum of 10 November. The draft was in an unfinished form, without a date and without a number. It was, however, in Lansdowne's handwriting.

[2] Lansdowne to de Bunsen, commercial telegram No. 11, 6 Nov. 1905. Ibid.

[3] De Bunsen to Lansdowne, commercial telegrams No. 18, 8 Nov. 1905, and No. 20, 9 Nov. 1905. Ibid.

[4] Memo by Lansdowne, 10 Nov. 1905. Ibid.

[5] See p. 208.

[6] Lord Hankey, *The Supreme Command, 1914–1918*, vol. i, p. 62.

[7] The fate of the sub-committee is obscure, one of the many mysteries of the period during which power passed from the Conservatives to the Liberals. In the autumn of 1905 Balfour was beset by many problems on the Committee of Imperial Defence, of which the problem of how to ensure its continuance when he resigned was only one. There was also a growing conflict with Roberts, the last Commander-in-Chief and a regular member of the Committee, who was arguing with increasing insistence that the only way out of the country's military difficulties was some form of

A similar fate seems to have overtaken the discussion of Belgian neutrality started by Clarke. The General Staff answered his three questions on 29 September. Surprisingly, they considered it 'generally unlikely that Belgium will form part of the theatre of war during the first operations, as the prospective military advantages to be gained by advancing through that country do not seem to afford sufficient justification for such a serious step as the violation of the neutrality of Belgium with its almost inevitable political consequences'. It was, however, 'quite possible' that a military stalemate between France and Germany would 'make it almost imperative for one of the belligerents (more especially Germany) to disregard Belgium's neutrality'. In answer to Clarke's second

national service. On 16 September Balfour's friend Esher suggested to him that ' the simplest way out of the difficulty with Lord Roberts is to be found in that Sub-Committee of the Defence Committee which Fisher wanted for certain purposes '. Esher's plan was that the function of the sub-committee should be enlarged to cover the general organisation of imperial defence, and that Roberts's plans for national service should then be brought before it; Esher hoped in his way to avoid the direct confrontation which threatened between Roberts and Balfour. All this again was only a part of Esher's ambitious schemes for the Committee, which would he hoped more and more undertake the main organisation of defence, with the Admiralty and War Office as subordinate agencies. He saw the new sub-committee as fulfilling ' the highest functions of a General Staff ' (Esher to Balfour, 16 Sept., to Sandars, 17 Sept., to Balfour, 13 Oct. 1905. Balfour MSS, Add. MSS 49719. Esher, *Journals and Letters*, vol. ii, pp. 110–11, 117–18. Esher to Knollvs, 16 and 17 Sept. 1905. Royal Archives,W39).

Esher's fertile brain also saw in tnis sub-committee a possible way of ensuring the survival of the C.I.D. when the Liberals took over. His view seems to have been that it would be much more difficult for the new government to dissolve it when it had sub-committees sitting regularly, with a definite membership, and examining a great and pressing question (memo by Esher, 5 Oct. 1905. Balfour MSS, Add. MSS 49719). He disclosed his plans to Haldane in early October, with the knowledge of Balfour and the King (ibid., Haldane to Asquith, 6 Oct. 1905. Haldane MSS, MS 5906). Indeed, Esher believed that the setting up of institutional machinery in the Committee might achieve still another object: it would allow greater control over Arnold-Forster, the Secretary of State for War, whom Balfour and his friends regarded as an obstacle to their plans.

It is difficult to believe that all this activity came to nothing; but this is what our evidence suggests. Lord Hankey said that the sub-committee never met; all its work remained to be done in December; and there is no indication, in any of the papers, either during the last days of the Conservative government or the first days of the Liberal, that the sub-committee ever came into existence. We can only speculate on the reason. Balfour himself may have been much less enthusiastic than Esher for all this last-minute re-organisation. ' The Chief inclines to leave things as they are ', wrote Esher himself on 7 October (Esher to Sandars, 7 Oct. 1905. Balfour MSS, Add. MSS 49719). Then all attempts to conciliate Roberts failed, and he resigned from the Committee in November; and so one motive for establishing the sub-committee had been eliminated. After Roberts's resignation, Balfour found another way of attempting to ensure the survival of the C.I.D. under a new government: he appointed Esher and French as permanent members. Perhaps he did this because he thought it offered a better chance of success than Esher's plan, or perhaps there was simply not enough time to do anything else. Esher's ideas were still being discussed in mid-October, Roberts's resignation with its dislocation of the Committee's work came in early November, and the government had decided to resign before the end of November.

and third questions, the General Staff declared that the Belgian Army could impede, but not prevent, a hostile advance, and that two army corps could be landed in Belgium after 23 days.[1] But once again the discussion does not seem to have been taken any further; in December the necessary planning had to be done almost from the beginning. The only surviving explanation of this was written in 1926 by Sir William Robertson, who at the time had been head of the European section of the Military Intelligence Department. He recalled that when the General Staff report came before the Committee, 'after a rather rambling conversation in which everybody joined the subject was dropped'. 'The truth was', asserted Robertson, 'that the probability of our being drawn into a Franco-German war was not yet a question to which Ministers were disposed to concede more than an academic hearing, and they maintained that even if we had to intervene our rôle would necessarily be almost entirely naval, and scarcely at all military, in character. In this view they were supported by the Admiralty.'[2] Robertson was writing twenty years after the event and he had a grudge against politicians, but his evidence is consistent with what we know from other sources.

Even the Service Departments themselves were moving very slowly. Fisher, who dominated the Admiralty, believed and continued to believe[3] that British action in a Franco-German war should be primarily naval. The Military Intelligence Department did not decide definitely against this plan until November, after a series of unofficial and leisurely discussions. Ballard, the Director of Operations at the Admiralty, first raised the subject in August when he asked Callwell, an Assistant Director of Military Intelligence, for a statement of the War Office view. Callwell's reply, sent on 28 August, endorsed Fisher's plan for a landing on the German coast.[4] In the following month, however, the Department began to reconsider its opinion. Callwell went on leave, and his subordinates, Fasson, Grant-Duff, and Drake, discussing the

[1] Memo by General Staff, 29 Sept. 1905. C.I.D. Records, Cab. 4/1. Paper 65B.
[2] Sir W. R. Robertson, *Soldiers and Statesmen*, vol. i, pp. 25-6.
[3] See pp. 244–7.
[4] Memo by Callwell, 28 Aug. 1905. W.O. 106/46, file No. E2. Callwell wrote: 'Even if the 120,000 British troops merely occupied some limited tract of country in Schleswig or some other German maritime province they could afford immense assistance to our allies—greater assistance probably than they would on the Franco-German frontier.'

question among themselves, decided during September that Fisher's plan was impracticable.[1] But these discussions were quite unofficial, and when they came to the attention of Robertson, Callwell's colleague as Assistant Director, he criticised his juniors for acting without proper authorisation or a formal request from the Admiralty.[2] They did, however, proceed informally, and in a note on 30 September Drake for the first time mentioned the possibility of a landing in France to fight alongside the French Army.[3] This plan was adopted on his return by Callwell, who on 3 October sent a revised opinion to Ballard. He now rejected Fisher's schemes and stated definitely that 'it is probable that the most useful purpose to which it [the British Army] could be put would be to give support to the French Armies in the field'.[4] 'This must not be taken to be in any way authoritative,' added Callwell, 'but I think the C.G.S. and D.M.O. who are as you know away would probably concur in it.'[5] Grierson's definite approval was not gained until November. On the 10th of that month Fasson wrote another memorandum attacking Fisher's plan, and on this Robertson minuted: 'Seen by D.M.O. who agrees with the conclusions arrived at. No further action at present.'[6] No further action was taken, and it was not until December that Grierson began to draw up detailed plans.

These discussions, leisurely, informal, and without definite result, hardly suggest that the dangers of a German war were felt to be very immediate. The same impression is given by the attitude of the Cabinet to a conflict which arose in November between the military needs of India and Europe. A large number of guns had recently been prepared for service in India; most had already gone, but, at the beginning of the month there were still 66 at home. On the 8th Arnold-Forster, who had already spoken to his colleagues about the danger from Germany, recorded in his diary:

> I spoke today to St. John [Brodrick] and Lansdowne about the guns. If we are to have any trouble in Europe—and with such a firebrand as the

[1] Notes by Grant-Duff, 7 Sept; Fasson, 7 Sept; Drake, 20 Sept. Ibid.
[2] Minute by Robertson on note from Drake, 26 Sept. 1905. Ibid.
[3] Note by Drake, 30 Sept. 1905. Ibid.
[4] Callwell to Ballard, 3 Oct. 1905. Ibid.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Memo by Fasson, 10 Nov., and minute by Robertson, 15 Nov. 1905. Ibid.

German Emperor you never can tell!—I think it foolish to send out all our new field-guns to India.

They will think about it! I wish I alone were responsible. I could stop it in two hours.[1]

On the 13th he heard from Brodrick: 'From what I can learn from Lord Lansdowne there seems very little prospect of trouble in regard to Madeira and unless we have some reason for it, I hardly see how India could consent to the reversal of the programme for rearmament.'[2] Arnold-Forster determined to press the matter and on the 15th replied to Brodrick insisting on his proposal. 'For the time being', he stated, 'we are practically without a field-gun in this country.'[3] On the 21st he appealed to the Committee of Imperial Defence, but he recorded in his Diary that Balfour had pretended not to understand his point.[4] But in the end his persistence had its reward: on the 24th the Committee decided that, if the Indian authorities agreed, the guns should stay in England.[5] Although Arnold-Forster had finally got his way, the indifference he had had to overcome shows how little his concern was shared by his colleagues.

In November Clarke tried to revive the proposal for a Dutch guarantee, which had dropped out of sight since July. On 30 November he told Sanderson that since Britain would be compelled to defend Holland 'in certain circumstances' a guarantee would 'only recognize the inevitable and . . . have some political advantage'.[6] On this Sanderson minuted: 'I do not think any answer is required. There are very obvious political objections to our offering to guarantee the integrity of Holland at present. Nor is there any present need for such a step.'[7] This minute was seen by Lansdowne, but he made no observation upon it. When it reached him the government had already decided to leave office. On 4 December Balfour handed his resignation to the King, and the long period of Conservative rule was over.

[1] Arnold-Forster Diary for 8 and 9 Nov. 1905. Arnold-Forster MSS, Add. MSS 50352.
[2] Brodrick to Arnold-Forster, 13 Nov. 1905. Ibid.
[3] Arnold-Forster to Brodrick, 15 Nov. 1905. Ibid.
[4] Diary for 21 Nov. 1905. Ibid.
[5] Diary for 24 Nov. 1905. Ibid.
[6] Clarke to Sanderson, 30 Nov. 1905. F.O. 37/380.
[7] Minute by Sanderson. Ibid.

5

Since Chamberlain's resignation in September 1903, Balfour and Lansdowne had been almost exclusively responsible for foreign policy, guiding the country through a time of extreme danger with great success. They had worked well together; but their methods of approach had been very different. Balfour had great intellectual ability. He could see a problem in general terms, reduce it to intellectual orderliness, with every fact playing its part in leading to a simple and overwhelming conclusion in a way that neither Lansdowne nor any other of his colleagues could. His papers on the Triple Alliance, the Russian entente, and imperial defence all show a talent for systematic thought, for consistent and ordered argument, in which, after the retirement of Salisbury, he was without a rival. With his gift for intellectual organisation went an aptitude for administrative organisation which made him the moving spirit behind the Committee of Imperial Defence. But the example of Holstein stands as a warning against trying to reduce foreign policy to a system; and Balfour too was sometimes the prisoner of his own intellectual constructions. It is difficult to resist the conclusion that if, in 1904, Britain had stood aside and seen her ally Japan defeated by Russia, then the loss of prestige and the unforeseen consequences which must have followed from such an event might have been disastrous for her, attractive though Balfour's arguments looked on paper. Again, he saw very clearly the immense potentialities of both the United States and Russia but allowed this realisation to distort his view of the practical realities of the immediate situation: he was fascinated by Russian strength which, when challenged by Japan in 1904, turned out to be illusory; and he based his Far Eastern policy upon the expectation of help from the United States—an unrealistic expectation in 1904. And events which did not fit into his preconceived ideas he tended to ignore: there is nothing to show that he understood the growing rivalry with Germany, or the effect that the French entente would have upon it.

Lansdowne was at the time regarded as a highly successful Foreign Secretary. One qualification of this verdict must be made at once: he was extremely lucky. He had made the Japanese Alliance in 1902 mainly to stave off the immediate danger of a Russo-

Japanese agreement and had pushed to the back of his mind the opposite danger of a Russo-Japanese war. When this war approached in 1903 he was already beginning to regret the Alliance: like most of his colleagues, he never foresaw that Japan would win and win decisively. Japanese victories solved his difficulties in an unexpected fashion; but for Lansdowne this was more luck than judgment. A second qualification that needs to be made is still more important. Lansdowne never really understood the most important event in his period of office, the event for which it is now remembered—the estrangement from Germany. For him it was, until the Tangiers visit, just an additional complication of his Russian difficulties. Sometimes British Germanophobia thrust itself on his attention; when it did, he responded to it with fear and distaste, but he never understood its significance. And this reaction typifies another general defect of Lansdowne as Foreign Secretary. He had no respect for, and sometimes even despised, public opinion, but he lived in constant apprehension of it; and yet, in spite of the constricting influence it had on his policy, and especially on his German policy, he never attempted to influence it. Joseph Chamberlain, or even another aristocrat like Rosebery, knew something of the workings of public opinion and could handle it with confidence and generally with success; but Lansdowne only disliked and feared it and never realised that it might be a part of his duty as Foreign Secretary to give it a lead. In the same way perhaps he never attempted to impress his views on the staff of the Foreign Office, who grew more and more violently anti-German in the years during which he presided over them. And finally he lacked Balfour's intellectual power just as he lacked Chamberlain's forcefulness or Salisbury's authority; none of his letters or minutes, though all are sensible and judicious, contains a remarkable or original thought. Altogether he would have been a thoroughly commonplace man—had he not been redeemed by one virtue.

Balfour later said that Lansdowne 'had the mentality of the great Whigs',[1] and when he dealt with foreign affairs his mind was remarkably detached, free from both prejudice and emotion. He only moved slowly and had to be driven by events, but once convinced of the need for change he was ready to adapt his policies. He was ready, if it was necessary, to break away from 'Splendid

[1] Dugdale, *Balfour*, vol. i, p. 335.

Isolation', in spite of its traditional authority, or to give up traditional policies in Persia or Morocco; that was why a man otherwise so unremarkable was able to preside over a revolution in British foreign policy. He distrusted the large, *a priori* approach to policy. He respected Russia's strength but he was never, like some of his colleagues, hypnotised by it; he never *assumed* the hostility of any Power, either of Russia in 1901–4 or of Germany in 1905, although he was ready for war with either if British interests demanded it. Above all, once he had acquired experience, he remained cool in a crisis. It is quite possible that if Lansdowne had not been Foreign Secretary in 1904 Britain and Russia would have been at war over the Dogger Bank attack. And even in 1905 he remained cool in face of what it was so easy to interpret as unprovoked German aggressiveness. All the time he was aloof from the emotions of those around him: already while he was at the Foreign Office we can see anticipated the Lansdowne of the 'Peace Letter' in 1917. He was not a great Foreign Secretary; but, all things considered, Britain was fortunate in having him in charge of her foreign policy during five years of rapid changes and extreme danger.

9

The Anglo-French Military Conversations

1

THE opening of secret talks between the British and French military and naval authorities about co-operation in war against Germany remains one of the most obscure, as well as one of the most important, episodes in the recent history of British foreign policy. In particular, the problem of whether they began under the Conservative government which went out of office in December 1905, or under the Liberal government which succeeded it, never has been, and perhaps never can be, solved beyond all doubt. It has, however, been generally assumed that the talks started in the last days of the Balfour government and were only continued by Grey.[1]

The evidence for this view has always been the recollections in later years of those concerned with the conversations. The first clear statement came from Grey who, in his memoirs published in 1925, asserted that after he entered office he discovered that they had already begun under Lansdowne.[2] The following year, Lansdowne himself, in an interview with Harold Temperley, corroborated Grey's account, although in language whose meaning is not entirely clear.[3] He was followed in the same year by Sir

[1] But see J. D. Hargreaves, 'The Origin of the Anglo-French military conversations in 1905', *History*, **36** (1951), pp. 244–8.

[2] Lord Grey, *Twenty-five Years*, vol. i, pp. 74–6. 'It was not till some time after I entered office that I discovered that, under the threat of German pressure upon France in 1905 steps had been taken to concert military plans, in the event of war being forced upon France. . . . Plans for naval and military cooperation had, I found, begun to be made under Lord Lansdowne in 1905 when the German pressure was menacing. The naval conversations had already been direct; the military conversations had hitherto been through an intermediary: they too were henceforth to be direct.'

[3] H. Temperley, 'British Secret Diplomacy from Canning to Grey', *Cambridge Historical Journal*, **6**, No. I (1938) p. 26. 'In his view the Entente was the same at the end of his period of office as at the beginning, except that military and naval experts on both sides got together and talked about possible schemes of cooperation as was their business, and talked indiscreetly as they always will do.'

William Robertson,[1] in 1927 by Lord Sydenham,[2] and in 1929 by Lord Haldane.[3]

This evidence cannot be ignored. But it becomes less impressive when it is remembered that it all dates from a period twenty or more years after the event to which it refers.[4] And since the nineteen-twenties abundant contemporary evidence has become available; and it all points unmistakably in the opposite direction. It is in fact possible to build up from contemporary evidence alone a complete and consistent picture of the course of the negotiations which places their opening at the end of December 1905. First is the negative fact that although most of the important records, official and private, of the Balfour government are now available, none contains any record of Anglo-French or Anglo-Belgian military conversations.[5] The discussions inside the War Office in the autumn of 1905 about British intervention in a Continental war were conducted without knowledge of French wishes and capabilities; and the final memorandum, drawn up in November, merely guessed at the size and distribution of French forces.

[1] W. R. Robertson, *Soldiers and Statesmen*, vol. i, p. 48. 'Unofficially, plans for military cooperation with France had, with the knowledge of Lord Lansdowne, Foreign Secretary at the time, been discussed between the Director of Military Operations and the French military attaché in London as far back as 1905. Lord Grey says that the discussions were carried on through an intermediary, the military correspondent of "The Times" but to my personal knowledge they were also conducted, at least to some extent, direct.' Robertson was plainly puzzled by Grey's allegations that before his time military conversations had not been direct.

[2] 'The "Conversations" were quite informal in Lord Lansdowne's time. In fact, so far as I know, Colonel Repington acted as go-between.' Statement on 19 July 1927. B.D. III.221(a). Cp. *My Working Life*, p. 196.

[3] Haldane recounted that he had told Grey in January 1906, when asked if the War Office had 'compared ideas about preparation with the French Generals', that 'there had been before my time some general conversations'. Haldane, *Autobiography*, p. 189.

[4] There is moreover the surprising fact that Repington, described by Grey and Sydenham as the 'go-between' in Lansdowne's time, makes no reference in his book to his activities then, although he describes the part he played under the Liberals with great detail and accuracy. He does in fact say that 'we had [before the end of December 1905] done nothing whatever to prepare joint military action and to gain close touch with French military circles' (*The First World War*, vol. i, p. 2). Repington's statement, unlike the others, appeared *before* the publication of Grey's book.

[5] All the official records for this period, including those of the C.I.D., are now open. Among the private collections available are Balfour's papers, Lansdowne's correspondence with all British diplomats abroad, the papers of the Chancellor of the Exchequer (Austen Chamberlain), the War Secretary (Arnold-Forster), the First Sea Lord (Fisher), the Ambassador to Paris (Bertie), and Lord Esher. None contains any record of such discussions before December 1905, while most of them (or, in the case of the politicians, the papers of the new Ministers holding the same posts) contain abundant reference to them after the change of government. Clarke had however hinted to Balfour in September that there should be talks with the Dutch and Belgians.
See p. 239, n.1.

But the most explicit contemporary evidence, not published until the nineteen-thirties, comes from French sources. In November, Huguet, the Military Attaché in London, was instructed to prepare an estimate of the force which Britain could put into the field. In a despatch of 18 November he put the figure at 115,000.[1] He made no reference to conversations with the British Army; and when his estimate was later substantially confirmed by Grierson, Cambon wrote that Huguet 'avait établi ce chiffre à l'aide de ses observations personnelles et sans aucune communication du War Office'.[2] This is in direct conflict at least with the evidence of Robertson, who states that the talks in Lansdowne's time had taken place directly through Huguet. As late as 20 December Cambon told Edward VII that Britain and France had not discussed their military plans and reported without comment a statement by the King which seemed to imply that Britain could intervene only at sea.[3]

The Conservative government resigned on 4 December; the Liberals took up office on 11 December; and the first recorded contact between the French and British military authorities took place about a week later.[4] This consisted of two meetings between Grierson, the Director of Military Intelligence, and Huguet. Grierson, questioned in January by the Foreign Office, claimed that there had been only one meeting, a 'chance meeting', and that no exchanges of importance had taken place.[5] In fact, Huguet's account makes it clear that there were two meetings and that subjects of the highest importance were discussed. Grierson had given him the details of British preparations for war with Germany and had described the course of the discussions between the War Office and Admiralty. While emphasising that he could not speak for the government, he had told Huguet that in his opinion Britain would not remain neutral in a Franco-German war.[6] Although there is no entirely satisfactory explanation of the discrepancy

[1] D.D.F. VIII.137.

[2] Ibid., No. 262, p. 366. It is plain from the French documents also that there had been no conversation in June, before the fall of Delcassé. See D.D.F. VI. 465, 470, 480.

[3] Ibid., No. 262, p. 363. It is also surprising that in January, when trying to persuade Grey to authorise the conversations, Cambon did not use what would have been the obvious answer if true: that they had already been approved by Lansdowne.

[4] The exact date is uncertain. Grierson said, 'about the 16th or 18th December', and Huguet wrote his despatch describing the first meeting on the 20th. Huguet definitely gives the date of the second as the 21st.

[5] B.D. III.211. [6] D.D.F. VIII.256.

between the contemporary evidence and the later reminiscences, the timing of this, and subsequent unofficial conversations, does suggest one possibility. It took place only a few days after the Liberal entry into office, and so short an interval might have been forgotten after twenty years by public servants like Robertson and Sydenham. And when ministers first heard of it, already in the past after only a month in office, it was easy for them to assume that it must have taken place under their predecessors.

Grierson's indiscretions were not the most important event in December 1905. The initiative that was to lead to the conversations came from Clarke; and it is here that we come to the most convincing evidence that before this month there had been no Anglo-French contact. As early as September, Clarke had hinted to Balfour that there should be talks with the Belgians and Dutch[1] —although nothing seems to have come of it. Now, on 15 December, he wrote to Balfour's friend Esher, who had recently become a permanent member of the C.I.D., complaining that the Admiralty had done very little, and 'not nearly enough' to prepare for the dangers of war with Germany. He suggested the examination of four questions: whether, on the outbreak of war, the Channel Fleet should go into the Baltic; whether a landing in Schleswig-Holstein was practicable; whether a landing in Denmark should be made; and 'what proposals for joint naval action should be made to the French'. He declared that 'the above and other questions which I suggested have not been thought out at all'.[2] If this is true, it is plain that before December 1905 hardly any serious consideration had been given to the problems of British military intervention on the Continent, and it was only now, after the fall of the Balfour government, that the task was taken in hand.

This letter reached a responsive Esher. On the 13th he had lunched with Clemenceau, and been told by him of the immediate necessity 'to arrange very secretly what military and naval action

[1] Clarke wrote that a guarantee, like that of Belgium, 'gives a guaranteeing Power some right to obtain information as to the military preparations and the measure of the effective resistance of the guaranteed State. I think, therefore, that we ought to know exactly what the military position of Belgium is, and I am glad you approve the preparation of a memo bearing on the question. As regards Holland, which has no guarantee from us, it might be well to obtain more information; and as our motive is plainly disinterested, I imagine there would not be much difficulty in obtaining it.' Clarke to Balfour, 17 Sept. 1905. Balfour MSS, Add. MSS 49702.

[2] Clarke to Esher, 15 Dec. 1905. Esher MSS, Sir G. Clarke, vol. v.

should be taken in the *first week*, should war unfortunately be the result of Germany finding herself in the minority at the Conference'. This information Esher had passed on without comment to the King.[1]

On 19 December an informal conference, consisting of Esher, Clarke, Ottley, and French met at the offices of the C.I.D. Almost certainly the new government knew nothing of it; and almost certainly those present were united in their anxiety at what the Liberal Cabinet would do and were ready to proceed without it. They examined, one by one, all the possibilities of a war between Germany and the entente Powers. At sea, the conference decided, the allies would have an overwhelming superiority. 'If a prearranged plan could be arrived at with the French Government,' they agreed, 'naval movements could be systematized and there need be no waste of naval force. Such prearrangement is at present impracticable; but a plan for naval cooperation could be prepared in readiness to be proposed to the French Government on the outbreak of war.' As Clarke had said, nothing had yet been done to arrange for Anglo-French naval co-operation—Fisher, who was not present, was opposed to joint planning at any time—and it must be regarded as certain that, in spite of Grey's statement, there had been no naval staff talks. The conference then went on to discuss joint naval and military action; and once again the nature of their deliberations shows that nothing had yet been decided, and, in particular, that Balfour's special sub-committee had never met. There were, the conference agreed, three possible courses of action: the stationing in the Baltic of a fleet to threaten the German coast; the seizure of islands off the German coast; and a landing on the coast itself by 100,000 British and 100,000 French soldiers. The conference decided that it was the third scheme which offered the best chance of affecting the war; although they did not know the French plan of mobilisation, they thought it quite possible that France could spare the troops. But since Britain would not be able to find the troops at the beginning of the war, a landing in Germany was likely to be valuable only in the later stages, if there had been a stalemate on the Franco-German frontier. When the conference came to consider the possibilities of purely military action, they had once again to start from the beginning. If Belgium were

[1] Esher to the King, 14 Dec. 1905. Royal Archives, W39.

involved, a force should be sent to aid her. If she were not, Britain could furnish a small contingent to the French Army; but such a course would be unpopular, and Britain would not be able to raise a large contribution quickly enough to influence the first battles. The conference decided, therefore, that Britain was only likely to be of use to France in the second stage of the war, and that she would then be able either to make a landing in Germany or to send direct help to the French armies in the field. Between these two alternatives they still could not decide.

They agreed that all these possibilities must now be studied in detail by the various Departments, and a most formidable list was drawn up of the preparations to be made. Because of Fisher's opposition, nothing happened at the Admiralty; but for the next weeks Grierson was busy on a scheme for embarkation.[1] The final decision of the conference was:

> If our Naval and Military Attachés could obtain any information as to the measures contemplated by the French in the event of an emergency, it would be a great advantage. Information as to the mobilization scheme of Belgium and the means available for the defence of the Meuse positions would also be valuable.[2]

It was the first time this possibility had been mentioned, just as it was the first time serious thought had been given to the circumstances making it necessary.

Even this did not satisfy the anxious Clarke. Writing to Esher on 29 December, he renewed his complaint that 'no one at the Admiralty is doing anything'; but his main concern was now with the military position. He believed that the Moroccan crisis could 'take a serious turn'. If war broke out on the Continent it would take time for Germany to reduce France 'and meanwhile we could play our game with effect if we were ready'. He therefore returned to the idea of discussions with the French.

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[1] D. S. Macdiarmid, *The Life of Lieut.-General Sir James Moncrieff Grierson*, pp. 215–16.

[2] 'Notes of Conferences held at 2 Whitehall Gardens on 19 December, 6 January, 12 January and 19 January 1906' (printed 26 January 1906). C.I.D. Records, Cab. 18/24. It is interesting to note that on 25 December French wrote to Esher asking him to lunch with the French Military Attaché. 'He has written to me to ask about how we work our artillery here and I could make it an excuse for both of us to perhaps extract some information out of him.' This also suggests that no regular contact had yet been established. Gerald French, *Some War Diaries, Addresses and Correspondence of . . . the . . . Earl of Ypres*, p. 110.

If the discretion of our Military Attaché in Paris can be absolutely trusted I think we might help him to sound the French General Staff on some points.

A general election at this juncture is a great drawback. We shall not be able to get anyone to attend to really important matters for weeks.[1]

A new actor now enters the scene. On 27 December Colonel Repington, the Military Correspondent of *The Times*, wrote an article in that paper to oppose an Anglo-German *rapprochement* and to deny the common assertion that Germany would be the likely victor of a war with France.[2] Repington, who had been Military Attaché in Belgium and Holland between 1898 and 1902, already had extensive social contacts with French and Belgian officers, and on the 28th or 29th he had a long conversation with Huguet.[3] According to Huguet, the conversation was one-sided, with Repington developing his views and repeating Grierson's opinion that Britain could not stand aside from a Franco-German war.[4] But by Repington's account Huguet confessed that his Embassy was alarmed at the silence of the new Foreign Secretary and wanted a definite statement of British intentions.[5] Repington at once sent this version to Grey, who replied on the 30th that 'I can only say that I have not receded from anything which Lord Lansdowne said to the French and have no hesitation in affirming it'.[6]

Clarke too received an account of the conversation, for on 1 January he told Esher that 'as he [Repington] is in touch with the French Military Attaché I have asked if he would sound him on some points as to which we want information'. This, thought Clarke, would be 'much safer than using our Military Attaché in Paris. It is very necessary to do nothing to alarm the government and besides the War Office would leak.' He was even anxious about Fisher: 'I hope he has *not* seen Fisher unless you had previously done so'[7]; and next day he stressed that 'except we three, however, it is best that *no one* should know anything'.[8] He wanted to conceal the truth even from his military and naval colleagues of

[1] Clarke to Esher, 29 Dec. 1905. Esher MSS, Sir G. Clarke, vol. v.
[2] *The Times*, 27 Dec. 1905, p. 6.
[3] Repington gives the date as the 28th, Huguet as the 29th.
[4] D.D.F. VIII.300.
[5] Charles à Court Repington, *The First World War*, vol. i, p. 2.
[6] B.D. III, p. 169.
[7] Clarke to Esher, 1 Jan. 1906. Esher MSS, Sir G. Clarke, vol. vi.
[8] Clarke to Esher, 2 Jan. 1906. Ibid.

the conference of 19 December. This continuing subterfuge and deviousness, and especially the use of the unofficial intermediary, Repington, hardly suggest that Anglo-French contact had already been established.

It was thus that the famous and controversial part played by Repington began. At the time neither Clarke, nor Huguet, nor Repington himself suggested that he had already been used, under the previous government, as an intermediary with the French. It would, moreover, have been most uncharacteristic of Lansdowne so to use him. He had shown his dislike of approaching Roosevelt through Spring-Rice instead of, in the regular way, through the Ambassador; and, a stiff and formal man, he would have been still less likely to make unofficial use of Repington, who had been involved in a notorious scandal.[1] But Repington's intervention was of the sort likely to lead to confusion in later years. Perhaps Clarke, reading Grey's memoirs and vaguely remembering that Repington had been in contact with Huguet even before the Anglo-French discussions of January 1906, assumed that Grey's account of conversations in Lansdowne's time with Repington as intermediary was correct. And a confused impression could also have been left on Grey's mind. On 3 January Repington wrote to him urging the need, for technical reasons, for conversations with France and Belgium before war began, but without saying anything of his agreement with Clarke and Esher. He offered to approach the Belgians informally. 'I know all the Belgian ministers, Court people, etc., well, and if I can be of any use in an unofficial capacity, you can always rely upon my assistance and discretion.' But in the same letter in which he spoke of military conversations he also expanded on the need for greater co-operation between Belgium and Holland; and he then said: 'I never ceased to preach on that text to Dutch and Belgian soldiers and Lord Lansdowne approved of my action.' This was to say but little: Repington was talking only of Dutch-Belgian co-operation, and when he referred to Lansdowne's approval he probably had in mind his period (1898–1902) as Military Attaché in those two countries. Yet it is not impossible that Grey, in the midst of a crisis, and naturally anxious to believe that in authorising military conversations he was going no further than his predecessor, read more into this casual reference

[1] Entry by J. E. Edmonds on Repington in *D.N.B.* 1922–30.

than it meant. Certainly the circumstances—he had been in office less than a month and yet was confronted simultaneously with a major crisis and a general election—did not encourage cool unhurried thought; and Grey, as later events were to show, had a curious talent for convincing himself that what he wanted to believe really was the truth.[1]

Repington had meanwhile been active on his own account. Not only had he written to Grey, but he had also, against Clarke's wishes, seen Fisher, whom he found quite unbending. He seems, complained Clarke to Esher on 2 January, 'to have no ideas except that of smashing the German fleet and thought that the co-operation of the French fleet was not required except that French submarines should co-operate from Dunkirk with ours.' 'All this,' said Clarke, 'is quite wrong.' He wanted, at sea, 'a complete plan of joint naval actions to propose to the French if the need arises', and, on land, military aid to Belgium if her neutrality was violated. Clarke therefore wished to go much further than Fisher; but even he did not yet favour military aid for the French *in France* and supported the idea of an expedition to the German coast, although, unlike Fisher, in the closest co-operation with the French.[2] He concluded his letter to Esher with a further hint that the government should not be informed: 'The General Election at this juncture is a misfortune. Nobody will think of anything else for weeks.' A minute by Esher did not conceal the fact that 'this has advantages, for it leaves us free.'[3]

Meanwhile Fisher had been taking action of his own; but neither to Repington nor to the French would he reveal his true plans. 'His mind was still set on the Schleswig-Holstein plan,' wrote Clarke after their interview of 13 January; but when he saw Repington he said nothing of it and spoke merely of a war which

[1] Repington to Grey, 3 Jan. 1906. Grey MSS, vol. lxxi.

[2] Repington writes that 'Sir George disapproved of the idea of our joining the French Army in case of war, and also of our supporting the Belgian Army unless Germany violated Belgium' (op. cit., vol. i, p. 4). This is confirmed by Clarke's letter to Esher: 'We have therefore *two distinct* sets of considerations. If Germany violates Belgian territory we shall be driven to concentrate our action there and can do no more than menace the German front line. If not, the policy should be to hold and find a line and use it later for the advance of a joint force not less than 200,000 strong—if the French would play up.' This last sentence can only refer to a landing on the German coast. Esher, on the other hand, minuted against this passage: 'This is doubtful and must be discussed.'

[3] Clarke to Esher, 2 Jan. 1906, and comments by Esher, dated 4 Jan. Esher MSS, Sir G. Clarke, vol. vi.

would be fought entirely at sea.[1] Repington complained to Clarke, and Clarke to Esher; but Esher observed on Clarke's letter that 'he [Fisher] has ideas but wouldn't tell them to R[epington]'.[2] Then, on 2 January, Fisher himself saw Mercier de Lostende, the French Naval Attaché, and spoke to him in the same sense as to Repington. He was very cordial; described (or purported to describe) his plans for war; and promised that, after a naval war with Britain, Germany would have lost all her fleet and all her colonies.[3] But what he concealed was more significant than what he revealed. He made no proposals for naval co-operation (as Clarke wished); and he said nothing about his favourite project of a descent on Germany. This was as far as the alleged Anglo-French naval talks ever got. Grey must have heard a rather garbled account of Fisher's part in the complicated and furtive activity at the beginning of January; and about them at least we can be sure that his version is inaccurate.

Fisher was, therefore, quite out of sympathy with Clarke, and he was not present at the meeting on 5 January at which Clarke and Esher finally asked Repington to approach the French General Staff through Huguet.[4] The three men then drew up a list of detailed questions for the French General Staff which Repington then gave Huguet, who left for Paris on 7 January. Their object was mainly to discover how, in the opinion of the French, Britain could most usefully help them; but one went much further and asked them if they realised that a German violation of Belgium would automatically bring in England.[5] According to Repington the French General Staff greeted the British approach with 'profound astonishment'—another indication, and from the alleged intermediary in Lansdowne's time, that no contact had yet occurred.[6]

There were two groups of conspirators: an inner group composed of Clarke, Esher, and Repington, and an outer group composed of Fisher, Ottley, French, and perhaps Grierson. How much this outer group knew of Huguet's mission is uncertain; but it

[1] This was confirmed by Repington, op. cit., vol. i, p. 4, and Clarke's letter of 2 January to Esher.
[2] Minute, dated 4 January, on Clarke to Esher, 2 January 1906. Esher MSS, Sir G. Clarke, vol. vi.
[3] D.D.F. VIII.308.
[4] Repington, op. cit., vol. i, pp. 5–6.
[5] Ibid., vol. i, pp. 5–10. D.D.F. VIII.389.
[6] Repington, op. cit., vol. i, p. 10.

would be surprising if they knew nothing at all. Fisher had already seen Repington; and although none of the sources says definitely that Repington told him of his plans, he must at least have known that something was in the air. Probably Esher, who was a very close friend, would have let him into the secret. Ottley and French attended another informal conference with Clarke and Esher on 6 January. They brought with them detailed plans worked out in their departments (those of the War Office probably by Grierson) for the embarkation and despatch to the Continent of British troops. Now at last they could make a definite choice between the various schemes for British intervention which had been put forward. The despatch of an expeditionary force to the Baltic was now dismissed as 'impracticable'. Instead the conference decided that 'any military cooperation on the part of the British Army, if undertaken at the outset of war, must take the form either of an expedition to Belgium or of direct participation in the defence of the French frontier'. Which of these two courses was adopted would probably depend upon whether Germany violated Belgian neutrality. Almost certainly this decision was taken on War Office advice, based on the study it had made of the military position since the last conference of 19 December; even Clarke, writing to Esher a few days before, had still preferred the plan of a landing in Germany. Although Clarke's description of this meeting, which was later printed, does not say so, it is very likely that the meeting was also told something at least of the contact begun by Clarke and Esher with the French. They are recorded as deciding that 'the views of the French would have to be considered, as it is essential that any measure of cooperation on our part should harmonise with their strategic plans', and that 'a plan of naval action should be prepared, in which a definite rôle is assigned to the French fleet'.[1] Clarke of course had wished to keep the secret from the War Office as well as the Cabinet, but his hand had probably been forced. Repington had dined with Grierson on 3 January and discussed the possibilities of British intervention with him,[2] and on 9 January Clarke told Esher that 'if Grierson will play up loyally and intelligently there is no need in involving the P.M. just now'.[3]

[1] Notes of Conference 6 Jan. 1906. C.I.D. Records, Cab. 18/24.
[2] Repington, op. cit., vol. i, p. 5.
[3] Clarke to Esher, 9 Jan. 1906. Esher MSS, Sir G. Clarke, vol. vi.

Huguet, after consultation with the French General Staff in Paris, returned to London on 11 January with their answers to his questionnaire. The French rejected the plan for a landing on the German coast and declared instead for direct military assistance—of one or two divisions if possible—to reach them within a few days of the outbreak of war.[1] This was the conclusion reached by the informal conference only a few days before. Clarke was now in touch with Fisher and Grierson as well as with Esher,[2] and on the 12th a third conference met, with Esher, French, Clarke, Grierson, and Ottley present. Once again, there is no record that they were told of the French reply, but the obvious conclusion is that the meeting was called to draw up definite plans based upon it. They decided that two army corps, four cavalry brigades, and two brigades of mounted infantry were to be sent to help the French, and Grierson undertook to work out mobilisation and transport arrangements for this force with the 'utmost possible completeness'.[3] All had so far gone smoothly; but Fisher remained obdurate. Clarke made one more attempt to convince him on the 13th, but failed completely. He related to Esher how Fisher had told him that 'he wanted our navy to do everything, that we have ample force, that the French would be in the way and so on'. Fisher had declared that 'he would never be a party to military cooperation with the French on French territory' and remained 'set on the Schleswig-Holstein plan'.[4]

It appears from this account that the Anglo-French military conversations did not start until January 1906 and then in highly furtive circumstances likely to produce confusion or even misrepresentation if the participants were later asked to give an account of them. We can be certain that naval talks never started: Clarke, Balfour's close adviser on defence, said so explicitly to Esher, and the same statement was made on 19 December by a conference which included the Director of Naval Intelligence; and Fisher, the autocratic First Sea Lord, always opposed consultations with the French. We cannot achieve the same certainty in the case of the military conversations while the recollections of Grey, Lansdowne,

[1] Repington, op. cit., vol. i, pp. 6–10. D.D.F. VIII.389.
[2] Clarke to Esher, 13 Jan. 1906. Esher MSS, Sir G. Clarke, vol. vi.
[3] Notes of Conference 12 Jan. 1906. C.I.D. Records, Cab. 18/24.
[4] Clarke to Esher (no date). Esher MSS, Sir G. Clarke, vol. vi. Cp. Repington, op. cit., vol. i, pp. 11–12.

and the others remain unexplained; but even with them the contemporary account makes it extremely unlikely that contact began before the Liberals entered office.

2

The first step towards telling the government of what was passing was taken on 3 January when Repington wrote to Grey urging upon him the need for military consultations with France and Belgium. The possibility of staff conversations with those countries was therefore in the Foreign Secretary's mind during the next few days and especially during some important interviews he had on 8th or 9th January. According to Sir Frederick Maurice, he saw Fisher and Esher on the 8th and immediately afterwards wrote to Haldane to say that plans for war with Germany should be drawn up[1]; it is at least possible that Fisher and Esher told him something of the consideration already given to such plans. He certainly learnt something from Clarke, whom he saw either that day or the day after,[2] although how much is not clear. 'I saw Sir E. Grey,' wrote Clarke to Esher, 'who sent for me to ask if anything was being done and was much pleased to know that we are considering possibilities. He thinks—as we agreed—that it is impossible to approach the French through official channels to ascertain what their views on cooperation are as this would give the idea of an offensive and defensive alliance which does not exist. As he said the governments must be guided by events and by the attitude of the French at the Conference. . . . His view seemed to be that the probabilities were against war; but he was fully alive to the need of forethought on our part.'[3] This letter makes it plain that Grey knew something—Clarke told him that 'we are considering possibilities' and had discussed with him the question of approaching the French—but it does not say definitely how far he was initiated into the secret. But what makes it seem likely that he knew something at least of Repington's and Huguet's activities is that when on the 10th Cambon referred to communications already in progress between the French and British military authorities he should have expressed

[1] Sir F. Maurice, *Haldane, 1856–1915*, p. 173.
[2] Clarke's letter to Esher describing the interview was dated the 9th, but Clarke does not say that it had taken place on that day.
[3] Clarke to Esher, 9 Jan. 1906. Esher MSS, Sir G. Clarke, vol. vi.

no surprise.[1] Sanderson certainly knew of Repington's part by the 11th.[2]

If this is so, then the question of whether Grey was concealing his information from his colleagues must arise. On the 8th, after seeing Esher and Fisher, he had told Haldane only that preparation for war should start, not that it had already started. On the 9th, writing to Campbell-Bannerman, quite possibly after his meeting with Clarke, he went no further. 'The W.O. ought, it seems to me,' he told the Prime Minister, 'to be ready to answer the question, what could they do if we had to take part against Germany, if for instance the neutrality of Belgium was violated?'[3] There is at least a strong presumption that he already knew that Clarke and his associates were 'considering possibilities', but told the Prime Minister nothing. Clarke certainly thought that his tactics were to be to keep the Prime Minister uninformed for the moment: 'I told him I had said nothing to C-B and he seemed to think that it was better not to do so at this stage.'[4] But if this deviousness is only a presumption on the 9th, it becomes a certainty on the 10th.

On that day Grey had his famous interview with Cambon about British intervention in a Franco-German war. At the end of the conversation, the Ambassador asked that unofficial communications between the War Office and Admiralty and the French Military and Naval Attachés should take place: 'Some communications had he believed already passed and might he thought be continued.' Both Grey and Cambon recorded that Grey 'did not dissent from this view'.[5] A reference to the unofficial conversations had now, therefore, appeared in an official despatch, and normally the despatch would have been sent at once to the Prime Minister and the other leading members of the Cabinet. But for several days Grey did nothing. He gave instructions that the despatch was not to be

[1] B.D. III.210(a). D.D.F. VIII.385.

[2] B.D. III.210(b).

[3] Grey to Campbell-Bannerman, 9 Jan. 1906. Campbell-Bannerman MSS, Add. MSS 41218.

[4] Clarke to Esher, 9 Jan. 1906. Esher MSS, Sir G. Clarke, vol. vi.

[5] B.D. III.210(a). D.D.F. VIII.385. On 13 January Grey claimed: 'I did not go so far as to approve of the communications by intermediaries referred to at the end; I did not dissent but I reserved my opinion because I did not know what they were.' If Grey really knew nothing about the conversations and did not ask for more information then his actions were remarkable. In fact at the time Grey recorded simply that 'I did not dissent', and Cambon that he replied that he 'n'y voyait pas d'inconvénient' (B.D.III.212). Was Grey covering his tracks for when Campbell-Bannerman and Ripon should see his statements?

printed for the moment, but kept in the Department[1]; and meanwhile he sent Campbell-Bannerman, not a full copy, but an abbreviated version *which omitted the reference to the military conversations.*[2] Sanderson, however, on the 11th seized upon Cambon's request. He was afraid, he told Grey, that 'the conversations which we know that Col. à Court-Repington has had with the French Military Attaché had been taken by the latter and by the Embassy as being authorized by our General Staff'. Sanderson therefore knew something of Repington's activities, which means that Grey must have done so as well. He asked Grierson if any official contact had taken place and received the misleading answer already referred to.[3] This is not the only example of an attempt by Sanderson to restrain Grey.

After his conversation of the 10th, Grey returned to Northumberland to resume his election campaign and arranged to meet Haldane, who was standing in a neighbouring constituency, at Berwick on 12 January. The two men then went for a long drive in the course of which Grey asked if military consultation with the French could now take place. Haldane agreed to authorise the soldiers to open communications and also agreed to go to London to urge Campbell-Bannerman to give his consent.[4] Haldane then returned to London in the strong position of being able to speak not only for himself but also for Grey—two of the three powerful Liberal Imperialists in the Cabinet.

There is no record of the interview, and it cannot even be dated more precisely than 'a few days' after the Berwick meeting. But it was of crucial importance. Campbell-Bannerman evidently had his misgivings, for he told Ripon on 2 February: 'I do not like the stress laid upon joint preparations. It comes very close to an honourable undertaking: and it will be known on both sides of the Rhine.'[5] The Prime Minister's doubts went of course to the heart of the

[1] On 10 January Grey marked his despatch of that date, 'not for print at present' (F.O. 371/70). Cambon's account of this conversation, which reached Sanderson on 12 January, was marked by him 'to be kept in the Department as a Secret Paper' (B.D. III.212).

[2] Grey to Campbell-Bannerman, 10 Jan. 1906. Campbell-Bannerman MSS, Add. MSS 41218. The abbreviated version is given in G. M. Trevelyan, *Grey of Fallodon*, p. 129, although Trevelyan did not know that it was the one sent to Campbell-Bannerman.

[3] B.D. III.210–11.

[4] Haldane, *Autobiography*, pp. 189–90. Maurice, *Haldane*, pp. 173–4.

[5] J. A. Spender, *Life of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman*, vol. ii, p. 257.

matter; but Haldane induced him to give his consent 'on the express understanding that it should be stated in writing that the conversations were not to go beyond the limits of purely General Staff work and in no way committed the Government to action'.[1] But the main point had been won; and Grey had moved with great skill, if not perhaps with perfect candour, to gain it. His letters of 8th and 9th January to Campbell-Bannerman and Haldane had revealed to them nothing of what Grey had learned on the 8th and 9th from Clarke, Esher, and Fisher, but had begun to prepare their minds for his more far-reaching proposal. Even when he knew definitely that exchanges had taken place, he withheld from the Prime Minister a full account of his conversation with Cambon until he could meet Haldane, his closest friend inside the Cabinet and a fellow Liberal Imperialist, and reach prior agreement with him. Haldane had then gone to Campbell-Bannerman to speak for both of them.

With the consent of the Prime Minister obtained, the conversations could now be regularised. Haldane told Grey on the 17th: 'I sent on Sunday [the 14th] full instructions to Neville Lyttelton [the Chief of General Staff] so the French Attaché will find General Grierson ready—I made it clear that we were to be in no way committed by the fact of having entered into communications.'[2] On the 19th he further reported to Grey that Grierson was in contact with Huguet, 'confidentially and without prejudice'.[3] Grierson's diary at this time records conversations with Huguet on the 16th, 17th, and 20th and, on the British side generally, intensive discussions of plans for war with Germany.[4] These discussions led, on 22 January, to an official communication from the British General Staff to the French, in which the former declared their intention, if called upon to intervene, to mobilise an army of 105,000 men within fifteen days and despatch it to France.[5] They also asked the French authorities for information to allow for detailed planning of the operations following disembarkation. This information was given in the reply by the French General Staff on 13 February.[6] The exchange marked the final victory inside the

[1] Maurice, op. cit., p. 174.
[2] Haldane to Grey, 17 Jan. 1906. Grey MSS, vol. lxiii.
[3] Haldane to Grey, 19 Jan. 1906. Ibid.
[4] Macdiarmid, *Grierson*, pp. 215–16.
[5] D.D.F. IX–I.34. [6] Ibid., 181.

War Office of those who wished to fight in co-operation with the French Army; and it meant that this co-operation would be achieved quickly and smoothly if war broke out.[1]

Similar conversations were started with the Belgians. Sanderson had asked Grey on 11 January whether he wished to open these, warning that 'the Belgians would, I suppose, let the Germans know'.[2] Grierson had, however, spoken of the possibility of talks with the Belgian as well as the French military authorities,[3] and on the 15th Grey gave his consent.[4] Grierson at once instructed Barnardiston, the Military Attaché in Brussels, to open discussions with the Belgians, warning him that 'the fewer people that know what you are doing the better'. The Belgian conversations, like the French, were to be 'solely provisional and non-committal'.[5] A detailed discussion followed between Barnardiston and Ducarne, the Belgian Chief of General Staff,[6] news of which reached the ears of the French.[7]

Plans for joint military operations had, therefore, been drawn up with some care; but Fisher continued to prevent the opening of any discussion about Anglo-French naval co-operation. He had spoken loftily to the French Naval Attaché on 2 January, but he had said nothing of Anglo-French naval co-operation; and he remained unmoved by all Clarke's attempts to overcome his opposition. Grey, however, seems to have misunderstood the nature of the interview with Mercier de Lostende. Both at the time and subsequently he assumed that Fisher was discussing joint operations with the French[8]; but this the Admiral steadfastly refused to do, even after Campbell-Bannerman, Grey, and Haldane had authorised the opening of military conversations. On the 16th, however, Grey wrote to Tweedmouth, the new First Lord of the Admiralty: 'Cambon tells me that the French Naval Attaché has been unofficially and in a non-committal way in communication with Fisher as to what help we could give in a war between Germany and France.'[9] Tweedmouth, who was staying at Sandringham, at once

[1] Contact once made was never lost. In September 1906, when French and Grierson attended the French Army manoeuvres, they had further conversations with Brun, Chief of the French General Staff (Paléologue, *Un grand tournant*, pp. 433–5); and in 1907, when the British military organisation was overhauled, Huguet was told of the consequent changes in the plans for intervention in Europe (D.D.F. XI.95).

[2] B.D. III.210(b). [3] Ibid., 211. [4] Ibid., 214. [5] Ibid., 217(b).

[6] Ibid., pp. 187–201. [7] D.D.F. IX-I.68; X.208.

[8] B.D. III.215, p. 203: Grey, *Twenty-five Years*, vol. i, p. 86. [9] B.D. III, p. 203.

showed this letter to the King, who now learnt, apparently for the first time, of the preparations that were going forward. The King approved; but he was now veering back towards friendship with the Kaiser, and he emphasised that 'all he desired was to be ready for eventualities and to give no cause of offence or complaint'.[1] Tweedmouth then consulted Fisher, who advised him, wrote Ottley to Clarke, that 'he does not think it would be advisable for us to participate in any more discussions on this question just at present'. Clarke of course found this answer most disappointing and wrote querulously to Esher: 'I can see no reason why these things should *not* be done and I regret that Lord Tweedmouth should have been advised against ordinary precautions.'[2] Apparently on Esher's advice, Clarke appealed to Tweedmouth, who evaded his inquiries; and there the matter rested.[3] Clarke continued to send anxious, querulous letters to Esher, lamenting the fact that the Admiralty was not fully prepared for war[4]; but they were of no effect. Esher thought Fisher was right: 'He (Fisher) is very reticent about naval plans and rightly so. For them no preparation is required. The Navy is always on a war footing and a telegram can send a fleet to the other end of the earth. So why disclose ideas, if there are any!'[5] He tried to overcome Clarke's fears by this argument[6]; but he also informed Fisher of Clarke's agitation and assured him of his own support: 'I say that nothing will induce you to disclose your plans to *anyone*, and you are right.'[7] Victory lay with Fisher; and, in spite of Grey's assertion, there never were any Anglo-French naval conversations.

Meanwhile the elections, which resulted in a great Liberal victory, had taken place. Grey's result, on the 25th, was one of the last to be declared; and by the end of the month Ministers were back in London and regular Cabinet meetings could be resumed. Now that the Prime Minister had approved the conversations it was possible to release the despatch recording Grey's interview of the 10th. Grey instructed that it should go only to Campbell-Bannerman and to Ripon, who, as leader of the Lords and respon-

[1] Tweedmouth to Grey, 17 Jan. 1906. Grey MSS, vol. xlviii.
[2] Clarke to Esher, 18 Jan., enclosing Ottley to Clarke, 18 Jan. 1906. Esher MSS, Sir G. Clarke, vol. vi.
[3] Clarke to Esher, 22 Jan. 1906. Ibid.
[4] Clarke to Esher, 27 Jan., 10 Feb., 14 Feb. 1906. Ibid.
[5] Esher, *Journals and Letters*, vol. ii, pp. 134–5.
[6] Ibid., pp. 144–5. [7] Ibid., p. 145.

sible for the defence of the government's foreign policy against Rosebery and Lansdowne, had asked to see all important despatches.[1] Sanderson had, however, asked Grey if he wished to send the despatch to the Cabinet as a whole, and Grey replied that he would do so 'eventually'.[2] This was on 18 January, and on the 21st Campbell-Bannerman also asked Grey if he would like a Cabinet at the end of the month to consider his negotiations with Cambon.[3]

When, however, the Cabinet met on 31 January, it was told nothing of the conversations which were then proceeding. Of its members, only Campbell-Bannerman, Ripon, Haldane, Tweedmouth, and possibly Asquith,[4] as well as Grey himself, knew of their existence; and when in 1911 it was revealed to the Cabinet as a whole Grey was sharply criticised by his colleagues. One of them, Loreburn, who in 1906 had been Lord Chancellor, accused Grey after the war of deliberate concealment. Grey himself had various lines of defence. The first, used as a justification to Asquith in 1911, and repeated in his *Twenty-five Years*, was that the Cabinet was dispersed for the elections when Cambon asked for the authorisation of the conversations.[5] But, as Loreburn pointed out, 'there are railways and post offices in Great Britain'; and the Cabinet could certainly have been told when it met on 31 January.[6] Grey also claimed that the conversations 'must subsequently have become known to' those Ministers who attended the Committee of Imperial Defence. But this was later denied by Clarke, who remained its Secretary until September 1907[7]; and there is no reference to the conversations in the official records of the Committee.

[1] Grey, *Twenty-five Years*, vol. i, p. 74.
[2] B.D. III.213. [3] Grey, op. cit., vol. i, p. 86.
[4] In his speech of 3 August 1914, Grey stated that in 1906 he had consulted Asquith (Loreburn, *How the War Came*, p. 79). The correspondence between Asquith and Grey in 1911 hardly suggests this (Grey, op. cit., vol. i, pp. 94–5). There is no record of such a communication from Grey in the Asquith MSS. Others who knew were Fitzmaurice, Grey's Under-Secretary (Note by Fitzmaurice, 22 Sept. 1919, on Campbell-Bannerman to Fitzmaurice, 14 Jan, 1906. Campbell-Bannerman MSS, Add. MSS 41214), Bertie (who received the official despatches), Hardinge, and Nicolson (Hardinge to Nicolson, 8 Feb. 1906. Carnock MSS, 1906). Many years later, in a letter to Spender, Fitzmaurice said that he had not liked the conversations and had told Ripon so at the time (Fitzmaurice to Spender, 21 March 1923. Spender MSS, Add. MSS 46389).
[5] Grey, op. cit., pp. 86, 94.
[6] Loreburn, op. cit., pp. 80–1. Cp. Lansdowne's action on the issue of British mediation between Russia and Japan at the end of 1903 when he consulted the Cabinet, then dispersed for the Christmas holiday. A discussion in which all the leading members of the Cabinet took part followed, and Lansdowne was overruled.
[7] B.D. III.221(a).

Grey finally admitted, however, that 'I ought to have asked for a Cabinet', and surmised that he had not done so because the conversations carried no commitment.[1] But it can scarcely be denied today that they did help to create, as Campbell-Bannerman feared, an 'honourable undertaking'; and the plain fact is that if Grey thought they were not important enough to go to the Cabinet, then he was not fit to be Foreign Secretary.

A much more convincing explanation for Grey's failure to consult his colleagues is that given at the time by Cambon. On 31 January he reported home that, according to some confidential information, Grey, Campbell-Bannerman, and the King, who had all spent the previous weekend at Windsor, had agreed that

> une extension de nos accords devrait donner lieu à une discussion au sein du Cabinet et qu'à l'heure actuelle cette consultation aurait des inconvénients, car certains Ministres s'étonneraient de l'ouverture de pourparlers officieux entre les administrations militaires des deux pays et des études auxquelles elles se livrent en commun. On a donc pensé qu'il valait mieux garder le silence et continuer discrètement des préparatifs qui mettraient les deux Gouvernements en état de se concerter et d'agir rapidement au besoin.[2]

Grey's fears, if Cambon's description of them is accurate, were well-founded. Loreburn and Bryce would certainly have opposed the conversations, and they would probably have been joined by most of the other Radicals.[3] On 2 February Hardinge told Bertie, with reference to Grey's interview with Cambon on 31 January, that 'anything of a more definite nature would have been at once rejected by the Government'[4]; and he later referred to the care which Grey had to take not to affront the 'peace at any price section of the Cabinet headed by the Lord Chancellor'.[5]

But, as Grey and his defenders point out, part of the responsibility for not consulting the Cabinet must lie with Campbell-Bannerman and Ripon.[6] Both had long experience of Cabinets, and Campbell-Bannerman certainly, and Ripon probably, had mis-

[1] Grey, op. cit., vol. i, p. 86. [2] D.D.F. IX–I.106.

[3] But not, perhaps, John Burns. According to Hardinge, he told an emissary from the German Embassy: 'Look here, sir, you Germans must mend your manners or you will find the Baltic black with our ships and we will wipe the floor with your Emperor.' Hardinge to Lascelles, 26 Feb. 1906. Lascelles MSS, vol. iii, Part 5.

[4] Hardinge to Bertie, 2 Feb. 1906. Bertie MSS, Series A.

[5] Hardinge to Lascelles, 16 May 1906. Lascelles MSS, vol. iii, Part 5.

[6] Grey, op. cit., vol. i, pp. 86–7; Trevelyan, op. cit., p. 139.

givings about the effect of the conversations.[1] One can only guess at Campbell-Bannerman's motives, as at Grey's. The most likely explanation seems to be that he was, like most party leaders, primarily concerned with the unity of his party, and that he was unwilling to wreck the precarious unity established only a month before. He never displayed much interest in foreign affairs, and he was probably more concerned with the domestic programme which his party had set itself. It was now, in fact, that the strength of Grey's position as one of the leading representatives inside the Cabinet of Liberal Imperialism became plain. He had already concerted a policy with Haldane, and the Radical Ministers were in posts of mainly domestic importance in which it was not necessary for them to know of the conversations. Grey was in the Cabinet not only as an individual, but also as the representative of a party, a party too strong for the Prime Minister to defy. It was probably this consideration which induced Campbell-Bannerman to acquiesce in action by Grey which was grossly unconstitutional. Grey's omission to keep the Cabinet informed on such an important matter is consistent with the deviousness he had displayed in obtaining Campbell-Bannerman's consent. The episode as a whole exhibits a lack of candour on his part and the introduction of a new conception of the relations between the Cabinet and Foreign Secretary. Lansdowne had referred everything of importance to his colleagues and had several times allowed himself to be overruled by them. Grey was not prepared to accept this risk; and foreign policy, more than ever before, fell into the control of one man.

[1] For Ripon's policy, see p. 272.

10

The Liberals and Algeciras

1

THE prospect of a Liberal government had been causing dismay at the Foreign Office. Mallet had referred to it with apprehension more than once: in October when the choice of a successor to Sanderson was being considered, he had told Bertie that 'the importance of having someone who will keep the Liberals straight is overwhelming'.[1] But there was always one Liberal upon whom Mallet looked with approval. Grey he described as 'quite sound',[2] the 'right man' for the Foreign Office.[3]

Grey was a member of one section of his party, the 'Liberal Imperialists', with Rosebery, Asquith, and Haldane; opposed to it was the Radical section, whose most eminent members were Campbell-Bannerman, the party leader, Morley, and Lloyd George. Since the disposition of offices in the new Cabinet was likely to depend upon the balance of forces between these two groups, others besides Mallet watched the course of the struggle between them with concern. Edward VII had an instinctive hostility to the political outlook of the Radicals, and especially their attitude to foreign affairs.[4] He was not afraid that their policy would take any particular direction, that it would for example be pro-German, but that it would be generally weak, internationalist, philanthropic. This was just the fear of the Liberal Imperialists. King and Liberal Imperialists came together: in October, Haldane, representing also

[1] Mallet to Bertie, Oct. 1905. Bertie MSS, Series B. To Bertie, 27 Jan. 1905. Ibid., Series A. To Hardinge, 4 April 1905. Hardinge MSS, vol. vii.

[2] Mallet to Hardinge, 4 April 1905. Hardinge MSS, vol. vii.

[3] Mallet to Bertie, 5 Dec. 1905. Bertie MSS, Series A.

[4] This was probably accompanied by personal dislike of the Radical leaders. 'The King thinks it curious', wrote Knollys in March 1905, 'that Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman hardly ever opens his mouth without saying something in bad taste.' Knollys to Akers-Douglas, 3 March 1905. Chilston MSS, Package C9.

Grey and Asquith, met the King at Balmoral and agreed with him upon the tactics to follow when Balfour resigned.[1] The three Liberal Imperialists had already decided that they could not enter a Campbell-Bannerman ministry unless he went to the Lords and left the leadership of the Commons, together with effective power, to Asquith. The King accepted this plan and agreed to hint to Campbell-Bannerman that a combination of the Prime Ministership and the leadership of the Commons would be too great a strain on his health. A few days later, Haldane sent Knollys a scheme for the distribution of offices, giving the Exchequer to Asquith and the Foreign Office to Grey, with the Woolsack for himself. The King accepted this list, with one exception in which Haldane concurred.[2]

But the conspiracy failed. When he started to construct his Cabinet after 4 December, Campbell-Bannerman firmly refused to go to the Lords; and he also refused to give the Woolsack to Haldane, whom he detested,[3] and insisted that it should go instead to his friend Reid. But he could not exclude the Imperialists altogether. An election was approaching, and Herbert Gladstone, who managed the party's electoral activities, impressed upon him that their support was necessary to win over the centre.[4] Campbell-Bannerman, although he refused to compromise over his own position or the Woolsack, therefore offered the three Liberal Imperialists the foremost places in the Ministry after his own. After some hesitation[5] Asquith accepted his offer, and the other two

[1] R. B. Haldane, *Autobiography*, pp. 156–61, 168–81. Haldane to Asquith, 6 Oct. 1905. Asquith MSS. Haldane's account is substantially correct; but he does not make it quite plain that at Balmoral the King agreed to take an active part in executing the plan on which they had agreed. Haldane was also told of Esher's plans for preserving the C.I.D. See p. 229.

[2] By Haldane's list, the other offices were to be filled as follows: Elgin to go to the Colonial Office, Fowler to the India Office, Tweedmouth to the War Office, Herbert Gladstone to the Admiralty, Lloyd George to the Local Government Board, and Reid to the Home Office. The King proposed, and Haldane accepted, the substitution of Tweedmouth for Gladstone at the Admiralty. Haldane to Knollys, 17 and 22 Oct. 1905, and Knollys to Haldane, 17 Oct. 1905. Haldane MSS, MS 5906.

[3] Campbell-Bannerman seldom missed an opportunity to deride Haldane, 'our philosophical friend', as he called him. On 20 November after a speech by Haldane on Ireland, Campbell-Bannerman told Herbert Gladstone that 'this friend of ours—such a wonderful intriguer and diplomatist, we are told—has no more tact than a hippopotamus'. Campbell-Bannerman MSS, Add. MSS 41217.

[4] H. Gladstone to Campbell-Bannerman, 30 Nov. and 7 Dec. 1905. H. Gladstone MSS, Add. MSS 45988, and Campbell-Bannerman MSS, Add. MSS 41217.

[5] At one stage Campbell-Bannerman, thinking Grey would not come in, offered the Foreign Office to Cromer, who refused, ostensibly on account of his health. A few months later, however, he told St Loe Strachey that he had done so because of his fear

then had to come in. Campbell-Bannerman remained in the Commons as Prime Minister, and Reid became Lord Chancellor as Lord Loreburn. But Grey went to the Foreign Office, Asquith to the Exchequer, and Haldane to the War Office. The three Liberal Leaguers were therefore placed in dominating positions inside the new government; apart from the Prime Minister himself only Morley at the India Office could rival their authority in the formation of foreign policy. It was true that three Liberal peers of moderate views were in positions from which they could exercise some influence: Ripon as government spokesman in the Lords, Elgin at the Colonial Office, and Tweedmouth at the Admiralty. But the pronounced Radicals went to purely domestic departments: Bryce to the Irish Office, Sinclair to the Scottish Office, Lloyd George to the Board of Trade, Herbert Gladstone to the Home Office, John Burns to the Local Government Board, and Buxton to the Post Office. The Liberal Leaguers, although they had failed in their first aim of relegating Campbell-Bannerman to the Lords, had succeeded better than they might have expected: the Radicals were in a majority, but they were not, as far as foreign policy was concerned, in the positions of power. A Liberal Leaguer later told Élie Halévy: 'The Liberal League did not simply vanish. What happened is simply that in 1905 it absorbed the Liberal Government.' And, he added, 'that is why we went to war in 1914'.[1]

But the differences between the two sections of the party over foreign affairs were much more differences of method and approach than of detailed policy. Haldane, writing to the King, had stressed the need for 'definite decisions', for a 'resolute lead' in foreign policy; and it was this need which both Liberal Imperialists and Edward VII thought Campbell-Bannerman would fail to satisfy. But Haldane had also spoken, though with less emphasis, of the need for 'continuity'; and here he was on much less sure ground.[2] Rosebery, the most distinguished of the Liberal Imperialists, had dissented profoundly from Lansdowne's policy and had been the only eminent statesman to condemn the French entente for its

that the Liberals would introduce 'socialist legislation' and because of his suspicion of their South African policy. 3 April 1906, Cromer MSS, vol. viii.

[1] E. Halévy, *History of the English People in the Nineteenth Century* (English trans. 1934), Epilogue II, p. 7.

[2] Haldane to Knollys, 12 and 19 Sept. 1905. Asquith MSS.

effects upon relations with Germany.[1] Haldane too had German sympathies. He promised Metternich before entering office that the friendship for France would 'in ruhigere Bahnen gleiten', and that the Liberal government would make a systematic attempt to effect a *rapprochement* with Germany.[2] The only Liberal Imperialist who took 'continuity' really seriously and who was determined to base his policy on the French entente was Grey. In his 'City Speech' of 21 October, speaking as the likely Foreign Secretary of an alternative government, he laid great stress on both points. 'Nothing we do in our relations with Germany', he declared, 'is in any way to impair our existing good relations with France. . . . [It must be] a condition of any improvement in the public relations between Germany and ourselves that the relations of Germany with France on all matters which come under the French Agreement should be fair and good also.'[3] He felt this so strongly that he was even ready to break with Rosebery over it. 'Rosebery is wrong about Germany and I feel it so strongly that if any government drags us back into the German net I will oppose it openly at all costs.'[4] But his opinions were decisive. Rosebery did not join the new Cabinet, and, although they were divided over the question of relations with Germany, Asquith, Grey, and Haldane continued to regard themselves as a distinct group and to give each other general support. Asquith, during these years, always supported Grey; and Haldane, although perhaps he caused him more difficulty than any other member of the Cabinet, would never push their disagreements to extremes. Although the Liberal Imperialists were not united on foreign policy, their power inside the new government was important because it made Grey's position as Foreign Secretary a very strong one.

Campbell-Bannerman had not been closely connected with foreign policy, and the most that can be said about him is that he entered office with a suspicion of some of the forces helping to create British policy towards Germany. 'Lansdowne', he told Bryce

[1] Crewe, *Lord Rosebery*, vol. ii, p. 581. Rosebery reiterated his view in public on 26 October. *The Times*, 27 Oct. 1905. [2] G.P. XX–II.6881.

[3] Trevelyan, *Grey of Fallodon*, p. 92. Just before the speech Grey had asked his friend Spender to publicise it in the *Westminister Gazette*. His main aim was, he said, to combat the idea that a Liberal government would 'unsettle the understanding with France in order to make up to Germany'. Grey to Spender, 19 Oct. 1905. Spender MSS., Add. MSS 46389.

[4] Trevelyan. op. cit., p. 84.

on 31 October, 'has kept cool and straight. Undoubtedly besides the (?prompted) press in Germany, the governing classes, court and army are actively anti-British; and I suspect that some similar classes with us are for war. There is an idea that we could *now* smash their navy and that in a few years it would not be so easy. These sort of people do not reckon with the financial state of our country and the unpopularity of war, especially after our own recent history. The thing in fact is madness but it exists.'[1] Of course most Radicals, even if they had formulated no definite policy towards France and Germany, were inclined to oppose any policy which carried with it a heavy expenditure on armaments or the danger of war and were therefore likely to look with sympathy upon any attempt to improve relations with Germany. Two of them seem to have had more definite ideas—Bryce and Loreburn, regarded by Metternich as, with Haldane, the most pro-German members of the new Cabinet.[2] Bryce in November was encouraging Campbell-Bannerman to make friendly references to Germany, and, like his chief, thought that 'our press—and other influences—have done grave harm'.[3] In public, he emphasised the need to maintain good relations with Germany, and proclaimed that 'nowhere are our political interests and hers antagonistic'.[4] Loreburn was one of the few who attacked the conduct of foreign affairs by Lansdowne, who was generally a respected figure. 'If the country pursued the policy of adventure of the last five years', he declared, 'it might whistle for domestic reforms.' He condemned the 'warlike ideas' of the Japanese Alliance, and said specifically of the entente that, although it should be preserved, 'it did not mean that we were to embark in wars on account of our neighbour and take part in [her] quarrels'.[5]

How important was Edward VII as an influence making for continuity in policy? Accounts of the rôle of the King as the real creator of British foreign policy began to circulate during his lifetime, and, although they were denied by Balfour and Grey,[6] they were widely and popularly accepted. In fact they are a complete

[1] Campbell-Bannerman to Bryce, 31 Oct. 1905. Bryce MSS, Box E27.
[2] G.P. XXI–II.7191.
[3] Bryce to Campbell-Bannerman, 2 Nov. and 18 Nov. 1905. Campbell-Bannerman MSS, Add. MSS 41211.
[4] *The Times*, 27 Oct. 1905, p. 10.
[5] *The Times*, 17 Oct. 1905, p. 11.
[6] Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 293. Grey, *Twenty-five Years*. vol. i, pp. 204–5.

myth. The King had almost no influence on the formation of policy, and his own views were too personal and impulsive for him to be a successful diplomat.

The most striking feature of his attitude towards foreign affairs is his inconsistency. In 1901 he 'did all he could' for co-operation with Germany[1]; but in January 1902, after the Bülow-Chamberlain controversy, he had to be persuaded by Lansdowne not to cancel, in an offensive manner, his son's visit to the Kaiser. Then, in June 1902, he was indignant at the attacks of *The Times* on Germany, and in October, in Lansdowne's words, was 'much afraid of going counter to the Emperor' before the latter's state visit. At about the same time he opposed the first steps towards an entente with Russia in Central Asia. By the beginning of 1904, however, he was furious at Germany's Egyptian demands and displayed probably indiscreet enthusiasm for a Russian agreement. But this new phase in its turn did not last long: in the summer, after his visit to Kiel, he swung right round and pressed Lansdowne to co-operate with Germany against Russia. The following year, 1905, saw his violent quarrel with the Kaiser and renewed opposition to Germany and encouragement of the movement towards a Russian entente.[2] These oscillations did not cease with the change of government; and in the spring of 1906 Edward was causing great embarrassment to Grey by his desire to meet the Kaiser when political circumstances seemed inopportune.[3]

These rapid changes were the result of the King's largely personal view of the European scene and in particular of his fluctuating relationship with the Kaiser. In 1902 he wanted better relations with Germany because, according to Lansdowne, he was anxious to ensure the success of the Kaiser's coming visit to Sandringham. In the summer of 1904 he suddenly started to advocate co-operation with Germany against Russia because of his highly successful visit to Kiel. The year 1905 was dominated by renewed bad relations with his nephew, but after a friendly exchange of notes at the beginning of 1906[4] he pressed his plan for a personal meeting upon the alarmed Foreign Office. He never showed understanding of the larger, impersonal forces bearing

[1] Lee, *King Edward VII*, vol. ii, p. 120.
[2] See above, Chapter 8. Lee, op. cit., vol. ii, p. 310.
[3] See pp. 297–8.
[4] Lee, op. cit., vol. ii, pp. 524–7.

upon the relations between states, and his purely personal interpretation of these reveals the limitations of his outlook. His same lack of concern with the realities of international life shows itself in his refusal to give the Garter to the Shah of Persia[1] and in his insistence upon an unpractical policy in Macedonia.[2] On the other hand his concern for personalities rather than facts and his own formidable personality made him a powerful ally for those he favoured—and Bertie and Hardinge built their careers upon this fact.

These limitations did, however, mean that he could have no real influence upon the formation of policy. There is not a single example during this period of an intervention by him changing its course. The great diplomatic developments of his reign—the two Japanese Alliances, the French and Russian ententes—were negotiated by his Ministers and their diplomacy owed nothing to him. Two of them he did indeed oppose at first: the Japanese Alliance of 1902 because it involved co-operation with a 'yellow race',[3] and the Russian entente because he disapproved of the offer of concessions in Afghanistan which started the negotiations.[4] Where he did disagree with his government, he almost never carried his point. He had to give way over the Prince of Wales's visit to Germany in January 1902, over the Garter for the Shah in November 1902, over Afghanistan in December 1902, over co-operation with Germany in the summer of 1904, and over the Norwegian succession and relations with the Kaiser in the autumn of 1905. His advice (coinciding with Lansdowne's) that Britain should mediate between Russia and Japan in December 1903 was withdrawn under Balfour's persuasion[5]; and if the government began, as he wished, to pursue a more active policy in Macedonia, this was probably more the result of public pressure, an increasingly favourable international scene, and Balfour's own change of policy. Later on, he had to yield to the Liberals about his desire to meet the Kaiser in the spring of 1906 and his opposition to the Persian settlement in 1907.[6] But although he had little influence over his Ministers, every action of his was important; for the world was still ruled monarchically, and other monarchs naturally attached

[1] See pp. 88–9.
[2] See pp. 117, 137.
[3] Lee, op. cit., vol. ii, p. 140.
[4] See pp. 91, 109.
[5] See p. 152.
[6] See pp. 291–2, 294.

importance to the behaviour of the King of England. His quarrel with the Kaiser could, therefore, do harm, as Lansdowne said, because the Kaiser was an effective force in his own country; his intervention in the Russian negotiations was important because only thus could the Czar be reached; and only he could confer the Garter upon the Shah of Persia. Moreover, the incidents of the Garter, the Norwegian succession, and the quarrel with the Kaiser all showed that it was not possible to keep him under constant control or surveillance and that, although pressure would always make him give way, it would require time to work. It was this combination of circumstances which led to his rather uneasy relationship with Lansdowne.

The King, therefore, provided no guarantee for continuity in policy after December 1905. The other influence which survived the change of government was that of the permanent staff of the Foreign Office; but it so happened that there was an important change among them at the same time.

The internal history of the Foreign Office under Lansdowne had been dominated by the steady rise to power of the new innovating anti-German party led by Bertie and Hardinge. By 1905 they were established in the Embassies at Paris and St Petersburg, and had achieved remarkable success; but the Permanent Under-Secretaryship itself was still held by Sanderson, against whose rule they had revolted. Sanderson himself grew more and more out of sympathy with the ideas which were beginning to prevail in the Office, and in particular he advocated a more patient and sympathetic approach to the Germans. He continued to be the main obstacle to the spread of the new ideas among the permanent officials. He was however due to retire in February 1906, and it was apparent that the succession to him would be decisive in determining official policy.

Lansdowne, shortly before he left office, offered this to Hardinge. At first he was inclined, for financial reasons, to refuse, and Mallet implored Bertie to persuade him to accept. If he did not, 'it would be too great a misfortune for it would mean Sanderson's prolongation and succession ultimately by Gorst if the Liberals come in. . . . The importance of having someone who will keep the Liberals straight is overwhelming.'[1] In fact, Hardinge did accept; and the views held by him and Bertie in their struggles against established

[1] Mallet to Bertie, Oct. 1905. Bertie MSS, Series B.

opinion now in their turn became the prevailing orthodoxy. In particular, there was no longer a powerful voice to dissent from the anti-German policy of the majority party; the appointment of Nicolson to succeed Hardinge in Russia meant that, with only one exception, all the important posts in the foreign service were held by members of the new generation, for whom the entente was a settled principle of policy. Now that Sanderson had retired, the sole survivor of the Salisbury régime (with the exception of Bertie himself) was Lascelles, the Ambassador at Berlin, who also favoured a milder policy towards Germany and was also increasingly criticised until his own retirement in 1908.

The changes had hardly been accomplished when the entry into office of a new Foreign Secretary necessitated a further change: Grey had to find a new Private Secretary. Hardinge saw the chance to promote Mallet, and, as Lister, Bertie's assistant at Paris, wrote, 'recommended Grey very strongly' to appoint him.[1] Grey accepted his advice. Hardinge had still further plans for Mallet. One of the three Assistant Under-Secretaryships was about to fall vacant by Villiers's appointment to Lisbon, and Hardinge proposed to appoint Lansdowne's Private Secretary, Barrington, who had only eighteen months before retirement. 'On his departure', according to Lister, 'Mallet will be appointed in his place and trained eventually to succeed Hardinge.'[2] The first part of the plan was at once accomplished, and Barrington was appointed to the Assistant Under-Secretaryship. These manoeuvres showed the strength of the Bertie-Hardinge group and the way in which they sought, with success, to consolidate and prolong their ascendancy. The man destined for eventual supremacy, and the man who was immediately closest to the new Foreign Secretary, was Louis Mallet, the most violent of the anti-Germans. Lansdowne had had as his Permanent Under-Secretary the cautious and moderate Sanderson and as his Private Secretary Barrington, a self-effacing man who has not left on record a single opinion on any subject at all; their replacement by Hardinge and Mallet marked a decisive change of advice and policy. It marked also perhaps a change of status for the officials. Sanderson had been an unobtrusive adviser, while Hardinge was an eminent and active figure who frequently accompanied the King on his tours; and the change from the silent

[1] Lister to Bertie, 12 Dec. 1905, Bertie MSS, Series A. [2] Ibid.

Barrington to the dogmatic Mallet pointed in the same direction. The Foreign Office over which Grey presided was very different from that which Salisbury had left.

2

The new government had taken office at a time of great international tension. The Moroccan Conference was due to meet at Algeciras on 16 January, but even the agenda which it was to follow had not yet been settled[1]; and it was plain that the agreements of July and September had failed to harmonise the policies of France and Germany. Within a few days of his assumption of office, Grey was telling Nicolson, who was to be the British delegate, that 'the Morocco Conference is going to be difficult if not critical'.[2] The first action of the new government was to declare its adhesion to the entente. Campbell-Bannerman did this at the Albert Hall on 21 December, in his first public speech as Prime Minister[3]; and Grey's instructions to Nicolson, sent on the 14th, required him to give cordial support to France under the terms of the 1904 agreement.[4] Nicolson was also instructed to try to keep the Spanish in line with France and Britain,[5] and Egerton in Rome to do the same with Italy.[6]

There were, however, many dangers in the situation, and Nicolson's first letter, on 12 December, warned Grey of some of them. Germany, he predicted, would insist upon control of the Moroccan police by a minor Power or upon control of the police in one port for herself. The French would oppose both solutions, and the conference would break down, leaving Germany free to establish her influence at Fez 'and undertake the duties which we had conceded to France—but without the reservations and safeguards which we had obtained from France'. Nicolson's advice to Grey was that 'if the possibility of an upset over the police question seems imminent —or probable—I should counsel concessions to the German desires'. Germany, he thought, might be allowed to police Rabat; and he even asked whether, if the policing of the ports was to be distributed among the Powers, he should obtain one for Britain.[7]

[1] B.D. III.191. Grey to Bertie, 13 Dec. 1905, Grey MSS, vol. x.
[2] B.D. III.200.
[3] *The Times*, 22 Dec. 1905, p. 7.
[4] B.D. III.193.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Grey to Egerton, 25 Dec. 1905. Grey MSS, vol. xxv.
[7] Nicolson to Grey, 12 Dec. 1905. Grey MSS, vol. xxxviii. Not in the *British Documents*.

Grey's first reaction to Nicolson's proposal was cautious. He replied on the 20th that he must first ascertain the French view,[1] and added on the 21st that 'we can if need be discuss such points as these later on'.[2] The next fortnight, however, saw a steady rise in tension, with alarming reports about German preparation for war, and Grey returned to Nicolson's idea. On 9 January he wrote to Campbell-Bannerman:

> In more than one part of the world I find signs that Germany is feeling after a coaling station or a port. Everywhere we block this. I am not an expert in naval strategy, but I doubt whether it is important to us to prevent Germany getting ports at a distance from her base; and the moment may come when a timely admission that it is not a cardinal object of British policy to prevent her having such a port may have a great pacific effect. It may, for instance, turn out that a port for Germany on the west Atlantic coast of Morocco would solve all the difficulties of the Morocco Conference.[3]

Here was a sharp break with the policy of Lansdowne, who had contemplated war over the German demand for a Moroccan port and whose main fear throughout the crisis had been that France would give Germany a strategic base or coaling station, in Morocco or elsewhere. It showed a real readiness to make concessions.

Grey was however determined to stand by the entente. In his letter of 21 December he told Nicolson that he would support France in her efforts to gain a special position in Morocco because 'if she can succeed in getting this with our help it will be a great success for the Anglo-French entente; if she fails, the prestige of the entente will suffer and its vitality will be diminished'.[4] The same emphasis on the need to preserve the entente emerges in his first letter to Lascelles, on 1 January. He told the Ambassador that Britain did not resent either German commercial competition or the growth of the German Navy. 'We build ships when other Powers do, but we don't regard their building as a hostile act against ourselves; the natural motive is the general desire to protect an Empire.' Here too was a break with the policy of the previous Cabinet: anti-German feeling amongst the Conservatives had been a result of Germany's naval and imperial expansion.

[1] B.D. III.199. [2] Ibid., 200.
[3] Grey, *Twenty-five Years*, vol. i, pp. 117–18. [4] B.D. III.200.

Instead, Grey attributed Anglo-German tension to Germany's dislike of the entente. 'If we were only quite sure that Germany did not regard our public engagements as incompatible with German interests, and if she would only believe that we do not mean badly to her recent friction would disappear.' If the conference went well Anglo-German relations would at once improve, but meanwhile Lascelles must be very careful in the language he used. 'The danger of speaking civil words in Berlin is that they may be used or interpreted in France as implying that we shall be lukewarm in our support of the entente at the conference. I think it is essential to guard against this danger, even at the risk of sending a little shudder through a German audience.' Above all, instructed Grey, 'our intention to keep in letter and spirit our engagements to other countries must be emphasized'.[1] When, a few days later, Lascelles was due to make two important speeches in Berlin Grey again dwelt on this point. 'Nothing said must be taken as an indication that our policy and intention to keep those engagements are in any way changed or weakened.'[2] When Lascelles proposed to declare that 'there is no cause of quarrel and that ill-feeling has been artificially created',[3] Grey ruled (although Brodrick had said as much at Guildford) that 'it is a little too soon to *endorse* absolutely the statement that there is no cause of quarrel or ill-feeling'.[4] This emphasis on the entente was something new. Lansdowne too had generally pursued a pro-French policy, but this was because British imperial interests seemed to demand it; where they did not, as in the Far East, he ignored French interests. But Grey displayed much more concern for the entente itself, for the preservation of French strength.

By January the danger of war seemed to be a very real one, and Grey was forced to make preparations, diplomatic and military, for it. On 3 January he repeated to Metternich Lansdowne's warning that if war broke out between France and Germany British public opinion might make it impossible for the government to stand aside. But his warning was much more comprehensive than Lansdowne's. Lansdowne had, by Metternich's account, only referred to the case when Germany 'light-heartedly' attacked France;

[1] Grey to Lascelles, 1 Jan. 1906. Grey MSS, vol. xxii.
[2] Grey to Lascelles, 8 Jan. 1906. Ibid.
[3] Lascelles to Grey, telegram, 11 Jan. 1906. Ibid.
[4] Grey to Lascelles, telegram, 13 Jan. 1906. Ibid.

Grey spoke, by the German account, simply of a 'war over Morocco' while by his own he did not even specify the cause of the war.[1] Although Metternich pointed out the difference, Grey repeated his more extended warning on 19 February; and this time both accounts agreed that he spoke simply of war between the two countries, without specifying a cause.[2] Grey assured Metternich that this was 'not from hostility to Germany, but rather because it had been a great relief and satisfaction to the English public to find themselves on good terms with France'. He promised that if Germany was conciliatory at Algeciras there would be a general amelioration of Anglo-German and Franco-German relations and that he would be able to speak with some effect to the press.[3] He at once informed the Prime Minister of this interview.[4]

On the 10th Cambon, as Grey wrote, 'put *the* question to me directly and formally'.[5] The interview is a famous one. Cambon asked if France could rely on British support if war broke out. Grey gave his personal opinion that if the war arose out of the entente settlement public opinion 'would be strongly moved in favour of France' (a statement Lansdowne had never made *to the French*); but he refused, until the elections were over and the Cabinet could be consulted, to give a binding answer.[6] It was in this conversation also that Cambon and Grey first discussed the Anglo-French military conversations. Grey sent a summary of this interview to Campbell-Bannerman (without any reference to the

[1] Grey's account is: 'I had also heard that Lord Lansdowne had said to Count Metternich that in the event of war between Germany and France public feeling would be such that in his opinion it would be impossible for England to remain neutral. . . . I said that I could only speak on such a matter as a private individual, my opinion being worth no more than that of Lord Lansdowne speaking in the same way but the opinion was the same.' B.D. III.229.

Metternich's account is: 'Im Laufe der Unterredung bemerkte Sir Edward Grey, er habe in den Aufzeichnungen seines Vorgängers eine Unterredung mit mir aus dem vorigen Sommer gefunden, wo Lord Lansdowne daraufhingewiesen habe, dass wenn es zu einem Kriege zwischen Frankreich und Deutschland wegen Marokkos käme, die öffentliche Meinung Englands die englische Regierung dazu drängen könne, Frankreich bewaffnete Hülfe zu leisten. Er, Sir Edward Grey, glaube, dass auch immer noch das englische Volk es nicht dulden würde, wenn Frankreich wegen des englisch–französischen Abkommens in einen Krieg mit Deutschland verwickelt würde, und dass es in dem Falle jede englische Regierung, ob konservativ oder liberal, dazu dringen würde, Frankreich Hülfe zu leisten.' G.P. XXI–I.6923.

[2] Grey's account in B.D. III.296, and Metternich's in G.P. XXI–I.7018.

[3] B.D. III.229.

[4] Grey, *Twenty-five Years*, pp. 117–18.

[5] Grey to Campbell-Bannerman, 10 Jan. 1906. Campbell-Bannerman MSS, Add. MSS 41218.

[6] B.D. III.210(a).

military conversations) and added: 'I assume you will have a Cabinet directly the elections are over to decide what I am to say.'[1]

Sanderson, who regarded the idea of a European war over Morocco as 'preposterous',[2] was present at the interview and tried, as he did with the military conversations, to restrain Grey. According to Cambon, he qualified Grey's statement that British public opinion would support France—which had apparently been quite general—by the statement that 'l'attitude du Gouvernement britannique et les dispositions de l'opinion anglaise dépendraient des causes de cette rupture et que l'appui de l'Angleterre ne serait sans doute donné que si le conflit se rattachait aux accords franco-anglais'.[3]

Mallet, on the other hand, was in a state of great excitement at Cambon's initiative. 'There is of course only one possible answer,' he told Bertie, 'and that is that if the aggression arises out of the entente with us and if we are given an equal voice with the French in the negotiations which result in the attack, we will take our share of the fighting.' 'There is no possible risk in taking this engagement', he declared. 'There will certainly be no war and we stand to gain heavily in France and everywhere by pursuing a logical course. It is expected everywhere abroad. If we refuse on the other hand we shall lose at once all that the entente has given us—be looked upon as traitors by the French and needs be despised by the Germans.' He had tried to persuade Grey in this direction, but Grey, while giving no opinion himself, had been 'much upset at being asked the question' and anxious about the reaction of Parliament. Mallet therefore appealed to Bertie for support. 'I am writing because I want you if you agree to write a very strong personal letter to Grey *on the receipt of his despatch which I think goes in this bag*. It will go to the King, C[ampbell-]B[annerman] and Lord Ripon and will you also prime Charles Hardinge. He must, supposing he agrees, do everything he can to buck up these miserable creatures.'[4]

Two other members of the Foreign Office probably agreed with Mallet. A month later, Hardinge told Grey that if the Germans

[1] Grey to Campbell-Bannerman, 10 Jan. 1906. Campbell-Bannerman MSS, Add. MSS 41218.
[2] Sanderson to Lascelles, 9 Jan. 1906. Lascelles MSS, vol. iii, Part 5.
[3] B.D. III.212. D.D.F. VIII.385.
[4] Mallet to Bertie, 11 Jan. 1906. Bertie MSS, Series A.

understood that Britain was 'absolutely "solidaire" ' with France they would shrink from provoking a conflict in which they would lose their entire mercantile marine and most of their foreign trade.[1] Eyre Crowe too argued that if Germany was inclined to try conclusions with France, 'a promise of armed assistance from this country would be the means to preserve peace'; if, on the other hand, Germany did not intend to provoke a war with France, 'then a British promise of armed assistance will involve no practical liability while the good effects on strengthening our ties with France might be considerable'.[2]

Bertie did as Mallet requested not in a private letter but in an official despatch sent on the 13th. He warned Grey that if he could promise Cambon no more than diplomatic support or neutrality in the event of an attack by Germany 'there is serious danger of a complete revulsion of feeling on the part of the French Government and of public opinion in France. The Government would consider that they had been deserted and might, in order to avoid the risks of war without an ally, deem it advisable to make great concessions to Germany outside Morocco in order to obtain liberty of action in that country.'[3]

Grey gave Bertie some idea of his own reaction to Cambon's approach before this despatch reached him. His own ideas were, he admitted, 'still in solution', but he feared that an engagement of the sort demanded by Cambon would 'change the entente into an alliance, and alliances, especially continental alliances, are not in accordance with our traditions'. He did not, however, reject altogether the possibility of a binding commitment to France, and even sketched the conditions upon which such a commitment could be entered into. France would have to keep Britain informed of her Moroccan plans and on her part would have to promise that 'if we get into war with Germany over any question of our own France will at least remain neutral if she cannot support us, and keep other European Powers neutral'. In any case, Grey believed that 'if France is let in for a war with Germany arising out of our agreement with her about Morocco we cannot stand aside, but must take part with France'.[4] This was the first time, as far as we

[1] B.D. III.299.
[2] Minute by Crowe on Bertie to Grey, despatch No. 30, 13 Jan. 1906. F.O. 371/70. The despatch is reproduced in B.D. (vol. III, No. 213), but without Crowe's minute.
[3] B.D. III.213. [4] B.D. III.216.

can tell, that a member of the Cabinet had said this unequivocally.

Since the true situation had to remain a secret, even from the Cabinet, we know almost nothing of the discussion that followed this correspondence. All that we know for sure is that Grey did discuss the possibility of a closer French alliance with Ripon[1]; and if he discussed it with Ripon, he probably discussed it with Campbell-Bannerman as well. Of the Prime Minister's views we know nothing certain; but since he was afraid that even the military conversations went too far in the direction of an undertaking, it is likely that he opposed the idea of an alliance. Ripon certainly did. He told Fitzmaurice, Grey's Under-Secretary, on 11 January that 'there are indications . . . which seem to show that the French people and many of their public men are expecting support of another kind [i.e. other than diplomatic] if the Conference breaks down, and serious trouble with Germany arises. If that occurs and we decline, as I think we ought to decline, to go farther than diplomacy will reach, I cannot but fear a cry of "perfide Albion" and a destruction of the present friendship between the two nations.'[2]

Whatever the result of Grey's discussions with Campbell-Bannerman and Ripon, he did not take the question to the whole Cabinet, and the answer he gave Cambon on 31 January had not received their authorisation. He reminded the Ambassador that military and naval conversations were taking place, and informed him, as Lansdowne had not done, of his warning to Metternich on 3 January. When Cambon pressed for a definite assurance, Grey pointed out that he could only give one with the consent of the Cabinet and that, 'though I had no doubt about the good disposition of the Cabinet I did think there would be difficulties in putting such an undertaking in writing'. A change from entente to alliance 'was a great and formal change, and I again submitted to M. Cambon as to whether the force of circumstances bringing England and France together was not stronger than any assurance

[1] This is plain from a letter from Ripon to Grey of 23 January; 'We said nothing about Belgium yesterday; but in the event of any closer alliance with France we ought to require a full and binding promise not only to respect her neutrality in case of war, but to maintain her complete independence if France were victorious. It would not be safe to leave this to be discussed with a triumphant France.' Ripon to Grey, 23 January 1906. Grey MSS, vol. lx.

[2] Lucien Wolf, *Life of the First Marquess of Ripon*, vol. ii, pp. 292–3. Wolf does not realise the significance of this letter.

in words which could be given at this moment'. He could not even repeat to Cambon the decided opinion given to Metternich that British opinion would demand British intervention in a Franco-German war; all would depend on the circumstances.[1]

This time there can be no doubt about the reason for Grey's failure to consult his colleagues. Grey himself had given Cambon a broad hint that, if the French demanded more, the Cabinet would have to be brought in and might be difficult. Sanderson, who had retired on 1 February, saw Cambon informally on the same day and told him that 'it was not wise to bring before a Cabinet the question of the course to be pursued in hypothetical cases which had not arisen. A discussion on the subject invariably gave rise to divergences of opinion on questions of principle, whereas in a concrete case unanimity would very likely be secured.' Against Sanderson's account, Grey noted: 'I am glad that this point was so well pointed out to M. Cambon.'[2] Discussion inside the Cabinet would of course, as Cambon also learnt, raise the question of the military conversations, which Grey desired to keep secret.[3] And Hardinge told Bertie that 'anything of a more definite nature would have been at once rejected by the Government'.[4]

The conclusion is inescapable that Grey did not tell his colleagues of his conversations with Cambon because he did not wish to raise the entire issue of Anglo-French relations and because he expected their criticism or even opposition.[5] Campbell-Bannerman and Ripon, who were alone in the secret, were uneasy at the implications of the relationship with France, and Grey's statements to Cambon on 31 January probably represented the limit to which they were prepared to go; indeed, on the next day, Ripon sent Campbell-Bannerman a letter which included the one bald but significant sentence: 'I am very unhappy about the result of Grey's conversation with C.'[6] Grey's other colleagues would probably have

[1] B.D. III.219. In September 1906 Grey minuted that an Anglo-French alliance before Russia had recovered would provoke a German attack on France. See p. 302.

[2] B.D. III.220(b). [3] D.D.F. IX–I.106.

[4] Hardinge to Bertie, 2 Feb. 1906. Bertie MSS, Series A.

[5] The King too was probably cautious (see p. 233), and at this time he told Cambon when he raised the question, that 'il faut avoir soin de ne donner prise à aucun soupçon d'intentions belliqueuses et offensives'. D.D.F. IX–I.55.

[6] Ripon to Campbell-Bannerman, 1 Feb. 1906. Asquith MSS. There is nothing to show why this letter should have been passed on to Asquith: the rest of it is concerned with House of Lords business. Bertie later told Cambon that Grey wanted a definite undertaking, but that he was not sure whether Campbell-Bannerman, held back by the Gladstonians, shared this view. D.D.F. IX–I.55.

been still more critical; and Grey decided to overcome this difficulty simply by keeping them uninformed.

3

Meanwhile, the conference had met on 16 January. Although it managed to dispose of some minor matters, it was plain from the first that the real clash of interests would come over the question of control of the Moroccan State Bank and still more over that of the organisation of police. The French proposed that the police should be organised by France and Spain together, if necessary with Italy exercising a general supervision[1]; the Germans, on the other hand, suggested various schemes which would prevent France from obtaining control.[2] Both sides regarded the future of the country as involved in the settlement of the police question, and neither would give way. By early February a state of deadlock had been reached. As tension steadily rose, Nicolson continued to support his French colleague, and on 3 February rebuffed an attempt by Tattenbach, the German, to persuade him to take an independent line or to press concessions upon France.[3] Tattenbach assured Nicolson that Germany could not accept the French proposal. By the 5th Nicolson was warning Grey of a possible breakdown of the conference which, if there were no complications in Europe, would leave Germany free to consolidate her influence and popularity at Fez.[4]

These were the circumstances in which Nicolson and Grey had earlier envisaged that a concession should be made to Germany. Grey now began to move in this direction. By 15 February he was telling Nicolson that, while he could not press the French to do so, he thought they might accept a modification of the latest German scheme: organisation of the police by a minor Power.[5] Hardinge was anxious about the direction in which Grey's mind was moving and warned Nicolson that any proposal made by him 'should be a personal one from you and not compromising the Government as the loyal support of this Government to France must be beyond all question'.[6] But Lascelles from Berlin supported Grey. On the 16th he wrote that he did not see how Germany could accept ex-

[1] E. N. Anderson, *The First Moroccan Crisis*, p. 352. B.D. III.269, 275.
[2] Anderson, op. cit., p. 353. B.D. III.256.
[3] B.D. III.265. [4] B.D. III.268. [5] B.D. III.288.
[6] Hardinge to Nicolson, 15 Feb. 1906. Carnock MSS, vol. '1906'.

clusive control of the police by France and Spain and suggested that some Power should come forward with a formula.[1]

In a memorandum of the 20th Grey explained his own views at length. The same basic ideas reappear: on the one hand support of the entente, even to the length of war; on the other, readiness to make concessions to Germany. He repeated that if war between France and Germany broke out, then Britain should help France; and he made the significant admission that some sort of obligation already existed: 'the *Entente* and still more the constant and emphatic demonstrations of affection . . . have created in France a belief that we should support her in war. . . . If this expectation is disappointed the French will never forgive us.' But the prospect of such a war was 'horrible', and Grey thought that to avoid it the French should be told that 'a great effort and if need be some sacrifice' should be made to placate the Germans. He again said: 'I should myself be in favour of allowing Germany a port or a coaling station, if that would ensure peace.'[2]

This view did not, surprisingly, meet with any opposition from the Admiralty. Tweedmouth, the new First Lord, told Campbell-Bannerman on 2 February that he was 'quite ready to support the view that opposition to the acquisition of a coaling station or port by Germany can be pressed too far and that with a sufficient "quid pro quo" a concession in this direction might be very wise'. He had explained his view to Fisher, who had replied that 'he would not be averse to the concession of a coaling station or port to Germany at Mogador or elsewhere but urges that if this is done a great fuss should be made of the magnitude and importance of the concession'.[3] Later in the month the Admiralty made an official examination of the question, the results of which were sent by Tweedmouth to Grey on the 25th. 'The point is', he summarised, 'that my naval colleagues would make a wry face but acquiesce in a "pied à terre" being given to Germany at Mogador or other point on the west Moroccan coast if the considerations of general policy made such a concession desirable.'[4]

There was however a contradiction in Grey's policy. He wanted

[1] Lascelles to Grey, 16 Feb. 1906, Grey MSS, vol. xxii.
[2] B.D. III.299.
[3] Tweedmouth to Campbell-Bannerman, 2 Feb. 1906. Campbell-Bannerman MSS, Add. MSS 41231.
[4] Tweedmouth to Grey, 25 Feb. 1906. Grey MSS, vol. xlviii.

at once to support the entente and to press upon the French a course to which they were opposed. The stress of events soon made plain the difficulty of reconciling these two objects. At the end of February a rumour that Tweedmouth and Fisher were willing to let the Germans have Mogador reached the ears of the French and provoked anxious inquiries from Cambon.[1] Grey, who had already been told by Mallet that the Germans 'interpret concessions as signs of weakness' and that 'they mean to try conclusions the moment they can get up a coalition against us',[2] at once withdrew from his own proposal. Writing to Tweedmouth, he made it plain that he was doing so for fear of antagonising France. 'France would I think object more strongly than we should to Germany having Mogador, so that proposal is bad for us all round; and it would alienate France as well as damage us in the way pointed out in the memo.' He also asked Tweedmouth to conceal the fact that the concession had even been contemplated. Tweedmouth replied that Fisher would 'make it clear that he does not want to see that place [Mogador] in German hands'.[3] At the same time Hardinge gave Cambon a 'categorical denial' of the Berlin reports.[4]

As the conference wound towards breakdown, Grey again found himself torn between his desire to stand by France and his desire to make concessions to Germany. France, who enjoyed the support of all the major Powers in the police question, decided to force the issue by demanding that it should be debated in formal conference, where she would have a majority, instead of, as heretofore, in informal discussions. On 3 March the crucial vote on this proposal was taken, and Germany found herself almost isolated, supported by only Austria and Morocco.[5] She decided to retreat and on 8 March allowed Austria to propose a compromise by which the police should be exclusively French or Spanish in every port except Casablanca, where they were to be under the control of a Swiss or Dutch officer who was also to have general powers of inspection throughout Morocco.[6] This plan, which represented a major concession by the Germans, was greeted with relief by the British.

[1] D.D.F. IX–I.313.
[2] Memo by Mallet on Tweedmouth to Grey, 25 Feb. 1906. Grey MSS, vol. xlviii.
[3] Grey to Tweedmouth, 28 Feb., and Tweedmouth to Grey, 1 Mar. 1906. Ibid.
[4] Hardinge to Nicolson, 1 March 1906. Carnock MSS, vol. '1906'. It is interesting that there is no trace of this episode in the *British Documents*.
[5] Anderson, *The First Moroccan Crisis*, p. 375.
[6] Ibid., pp. 377–8.

Nicolson reported that all the powers except France and Spain favoured it, and he pressed Révoil, the French delegate, to give way. 'There could be no question', he told him on the 11th, 'of breaking down the conference on that point and at a moment when a favourable end was so nearly reached.'[1] The French, he reported, believed that Germany could be squeezed still further, but after a talk with the German delegate he concluded that this offer was their last word.[2] Most of the Foreign Office shared Nicolson's view. Hardinge minuted that 'it will be unfortunate if in the concessions offered by Germany the French sacrifice the substance to the shadow, and we find ourselves with them in a hopeless minority'; and he approved cordially of Nicolson's pressure on Révoil.[3] This was also Grey's view. He at once told Cambon that the Austrian proposal represented a real concession on the part of Germany and added that it would not do for the conference to result in failure after an agreement had been so nearly reached.[4] A private letter to Campbell-Bannerman on 10 March explained his view. The German concession, he wrote, 'really gives them [the French] the substance', and he declared that 'it will be most unfortunate if they do not come to an agreement now'. A postscript asserted that 'the Germans have in effect climbed down and declared for peace'.[5] Campbell-Bannerman replied that he entirely agreed.[6]

But there were from the beginning discordant notes in the general chorus of approval for Nicolson's actions. On 12 March Bertie told Grey that it would create an 'unfortunate impression' on French opinion if it learnt of the British pressure. The government, he predicted, could blame Britain if it had to give way; and 'it may then become a cry—encouraged by Germany—of "save us from our friends" '.[7] Bertie's warning was underlined by the fact that a new French government was in power: Rouvier had fallen on 7 March and been replaced by Sarrien, with Bourgeois as Foreign Minister. A general election was impending. This theme was taken up by Eyre Crowe, who minuted on 12 March that in

[1] B.D. III.339. [2] B.D. III.345.

[3] Hardinge's minutes on Nicolson to Grey, telegram No. 91, 9 March, and telegram No. 94, 11 March 1906. F.O. 331/173. The second telegram is at B.D. III.339, but without the minutes.

[4] B.D. III.333.

[5] Grey to Campbell-Bannerman, 10 March 1906. Campbell-Bannerman MSS, Add. MSS 41218.

[6] Campbell-Bannerman to Grey, 10 March 1906. Grey MSS, vol. lxi.

[7] Bertie to Grey, 12 March 1906. Grey MSS, vol. x.

view of the dangers created by these events Britain should, while urging the French to accept the German offer, nevertheless give the assurance that she would continue her support if it was rejected.[1]

These warnings were reinforced by news from Paris. On the 14th an article appeared in the *Temps*, which Crowe described as 'obviously inspired', declaring that France would rather see a breakdown of the conference than give way over Casablanca. Grey was now faced with a choice between his policy of support for France and his policy of concession to Germany. He chose the former. On the 14th he minuted that 'as the French take Casablanca so seriously we must take it so too',[2] and instructed Nicolson to support them if they maintained their refusal of the German offer.[3] 'We can't press our advice on them to the point of breaking up the *entente*', he told Cromer.[4]

The worst consequences of the affair were still to come. On the 15th Bertie received two visitors: Crozier, the French Minister to Denmark, who had come from Bourgeois, and told him that the new Foreign Minister did not know whether to believe reports that Britain under the Liberals was withdrawing into isolation; and Clemenceau, the Minister of the Interior, who declared that many of his colleagues regarded Nicolson's pressure as proof that Britain had reached an arrangement with Germany behind France's back.[5] This news caused alarm in London. Grey at once telegraphed that Nicolson would continue to support Révoil. 'Cordial co-operation with France in all parts of the world remains a cardinal point of British policy and in some respects we have carried it further than the late Government here were required to do.'[6] In a private letter to Bertie, Grey confessed that he had heard of the French suspicions with 'some indignation'. He still thought France had made 'a great mistake' in rejecting the German offer: if the conference broke up over her refusal to do so, public opinion in England and Europe would say that she was 'unreasonable and did not know how to take her advantage when she had it'. Nevertheless, he would continue to support the French.[7] Bertie trans-

[1] B.D. III.342.
[2] Minute on Nicolson to Grey, telegram No. 96, 12 March 1906. F.O. 371/173.
[3] B.D. III.350. [4] Grey to Cromer, 15 March 1906. Grey MSS, vol. vii.
[5] B.D. III.355-6. [6] B.D. III.357.
[7] Grey to Bertie, 15 Mar. 1906. Grey MSS, vol. x.

mitted Grey's explanation to the French, who were, he reported on the following day, quite reassured.[1] He told Grey rather severely that 'we must take the French as they are and not as one would wish them to be'; they had, he explained, a 'hereditary distrust' of Germany.[2]

It is interesting to find that Hardinge disagreed with Grey—the first sign of a rift between him and the more extreme anti-German party in the Foreign Office. He told Nicolson that he was opposed to the telegram instructing him to support France even if she would not give way, a statement borne out by his minutes in the records. He thought that if the conference broke down the French position in Morocco would be extremely vulnerable. 'We shall then', he complained, 'be exposed to any violent action which the French may take to retrieve their losses and shall find ourselves compelled to support France in a war against Germany.'[3] Nicolson probably shared Hardinge's view: he told Grey that the Germans were ready to make concessions to achieve a settlement, but that the French 'apparently do not care if the conference does break down'.[4]

Hardinge and Nicolson were, however, overruled by Grey, and Britain continued her policy of complete support for France. Even an American compromise proposal that France and Spain alone should police the ports but conjointly and under strict international supervision, was rejected,[5] once again against Nicolson's advice.[6] At the request of the French, Grey agreed to make representations at Washington.[7] Durand warned that Roosevelt regarded the British as 'opponents of Germany and possibly inclined to push France to extremes'—an impression that Crowe promptly attributed to Berlin.[8] In view, however, of Anglo-French firmness the Germans climbed down still further and on 26 March agreed that France and Spain alone should control the police at all eight ports.[9] The two Powers were to police only two of the eight conjointly, and their forces were to be under the loose control of a Swiss Inspector.[10] Agreement on the other outstanding questions was

[1] Bertie to Grey, 16 Mar. 1906. Ibid.
[2] Bertie to Grey, 17 Mar. 1906. Ibid.
[3] B.D. III.354.
[4] Nicolson to Grey, 19 March 1906. Grey MSS, vol. xxxviii.
[5] Grey to Bertie, telegram No. 43, 21 March 1906. F.O. 371/174.
[6] Nicolson to Grey, telegram No. 114, 21 March 1906. Ibid.
[7] B.D. III.375, 377.
[8] Durand to Grey, telegram No. 17, 24 March 1906. Ibid. At B.D. III.381, without minute by Crowe.
[9] B.D. III.382.
[10] Anderson, *The First Moroccan Crisis*, pp. 392–3.

soon reached, and the conference concluded its work on 7 April. It had been a major defeat for Germany.

Grey's policy during the Algeciras crisis, although superficially like Lansdowne's, had in fact taken a new direction. Lansdowne's main fear had been that the crisis would lead to the acquisition of a Moroccan port by Germany, and he had been ready to go to war to prevent this happening. Grey was much less concerned with the imperial and naval aspects of the crisis and even thought seriously of conceding a port to the Germans if it would produce a settlement. Instead he emphasised, much more than Lansdowne had, the need to preserve the entente: he made relations with Germany dependent on it and convinced himself that Britain should go to war rather than see it destroyed. So important to him was it to please the French that he gave up his plan for a concession to Germany in Morocco and withdrew his initial support for the Austrian compromise proposal. By putting the entente at the forefront of his policy he necessarily made it difficult to act independently of the French and so reduced his freedom of movement.

This new concern for the entente was part of an important change of emphasis in policy when the new government came into office. The Conservatives' natural preoccupation had been with imperial and naval affairs; Grey's thoughts were increasingly concentrated on Europe. 'It is the situation in Europe', he told Nicolson, 'that will in the long run decide the position of France and Germany respectively in Morocco'[1]—an attitude that might almost be described as the reverse of Lansdowne's. This interest in Europe was accompanied by a solicitude for Russian strength which was again a reversal of the attitude of the previous government. 'The recovery of Russia will change the situation in Europe to the advantage of France',[2] he wrote; and, 'an *entente* between Russia, France and ourselves would be absolutely secure. If it is necessary to check Germany it could then be done.'[3] What Grey was in fact working towards was a new doctrine of the European balance of power. He had not yet identified Germany as the real threat to the balance, and in fact did not yet see clearly the implications of his policy, but more and more this care for the balance came to dominate his actions; and it was a fundamental change.

[1] B.D. III.278, 288. [2] Ibid. [3] B.D. III.299.

11

The Russian Entente, 1906–1907

I

GREY entered office with a strong desire to conclude an agreement with Russia: on 19 February he told Spring-Rice that he would 'try when she desires it and is ready'[1], and on 19 March he and Benckendorff tacitly agreed to work for a definite understanding.[2] Minto, the new Viceroy of India, was asked to state his terms on 23 March, and was firmly told by Morley to 'take note of the strong tide that is now running in this direction'.[3] Finally, on 24 April, at a dinner at Grey's house, Asquith, Morley, Nicolson, who was shortly to go to Russia as Ambassador, and Grey himself 'talked *entente* in and out, up and down',[4] with the result that Nicolson was sent to St Petersburg with instructions to work for an agreement.[5]

Grey's own statements leave no doubt that his chief motive in seeking a Russian entente was to change the balance of forces in Europe and in particular to create a counterpoise to Germany. 'I am impatient to see Russia re-established as a factor in European politics', he told Spring-Rice on 19 February,[6] and in his memorandum on Morocco at the height of the Algeciras crisis he wrote:

> The door is being kept open by us for a rapprochement with Russia; there is at least a prospect that when Russia is re-established we shall find ourselves on good terms with her. An *entente* between Russia, France and ourselves would be absolutely secure. If it is necessary to check

[1] Grey to Spring-Rice, 19 Feb. 1906. Grey MSS, vol. xxxiii.
[2] B.D. IV.212.
[3] Morley to Minto, 23 March and 5 April 1906. Morley MSS, vol. i.
[4] Morley to Minto, 25 April 1906. Ibid. Sir Harold Nicolson, *Sir Arthur Nicolson*, p. 206. where it is said that Haldane also was present.
[5] Nicolson, op. cit., p. 206.
[6] Grey to Spring-Rice, 19 Feb. 1906. Grey MSS, vol. xxxiii.

Germany it could then be done. The present is the most unfavourable moment for attempting to check her.[1]

The view that the real purpose of a Russian agreement was to check Germany was also held, in a more extreme form, by official opinion in the War Office. A memorandum in March by Robertson, the head of the European section of the Intelligence Division, which was sent to Haldane and Grey, declared:

> By thus detaching her [Russia] from Germany we should have her on our side if and when Germany reaches the Persian Gulf—a contingency which is far less to be desired than Russia's presence there. It would also tend to weaken Germany's military position in Europe, and therefore to strengthen our own as well as that of France, the ally of Russia, and the Power which, like Great Britain, has much to fear from German preponderance in Europe.
>
> This course would, however, probably mean that Germany's enmity towards us would be increased, but her enmity is almost certain to be increased (though there is no just reason why it should) if we succeed in coming to an agreement with Russia on any terms. Further, Germany's avowed aims and ambitions are such that they seem bound, if persisted in, to bring her into armed collision with us sooner or later, and therefore a little more or less enmity on her part is not a matter of great importance.

Grierson, the Director of Military Intelligence, noted that he subscribed to these views, and Lyttelton, the Chief of General Staff, that he agreed generally.[2]

The critical decision had already been taken, but the precise circumstances in which negotiations were opened were highly significant. There was a conflict at St Petersburg between those who favoured Britain and France and those who favoured Germany, and this domestic rivalry expressed in a more tangible form the larger international rivalry and made it seem more than ever likely that Anglo-Russian and German-Russian friendship were incompatible. In May Lamsdorff resigned, and the appointment of Isvolsky to succeed him was at first interpreted as a victory for the German party[3]: in July Morley was writing that 'Lamsdorff, it seems, was driven from office like Delcassé by Germany, exactly

[1] B.D. III.299.

[2] Memo by Robertson, 20 March, with minutes by Grierson 22 March and Lyttelton, 23 March 1906. Grey MSS, vol. lxiii. Not in the *British Documents*.

[3] B.D. IV.219.

because he was for making friends with us'.[1] This early suspicion of Isvolsky was never entirely overcome and kept the British uneasily aware of German activity at St Petersburg.[2] Morley came to believe that 'the key to German diplomacy is to prevent anything like a triple *entente* of England, France and Russia. . . . For the same reasons that make Germany seek coldness or a quarrel between us and Russia, we ought to do what we can to baulk her'.[3]

The opening of Anglo-Russian talks was also immediately preceded by reports of German infiltration into Persia: O'Conor told Grey on 24 April that 'if Great Britain and Russia do not very soon come to an agreement with regard to their respective interests in Persia they may find themselves confronted there with Germany very much as did France in Morocco'.[4] At the beginning of May a report reached Grey that the Persians, in urgent need of money but rejected by Britain and Russia, would turn to Germany.[5] Grey at once suggested to Benckendorff that Britain and Russia should forestall the Germans by a joint loan.[6] It was against this background that Nicolson arrived in St Petersburg on 28 May and on the 29th proposed the opening of official talks to Isvolsky.[7]

2

How did Grey deal with his colleagues while making the entente? Apparently nothing was kept from the Cabinet, although there was none of that close and continuous supervision to which Lansdowne had subjected himself. Lansdowne had treated his colleagues scrupulously, and whenever a written commitment was under consideration—as with his abortive Anglo-German agreement of March 1901, the Anglo-Japanese Alliances of 1902 and 1905, the French entente of 1904, the projected Russian entente of 1903–4—he had circulated a draft, or sometimes many drafts, showing the various stages of the negotiations, to the whole Cabinet and asked for their observations. Many amendments suggested by his colleagues were incorporated into his own drafts. Grey was not

[1] Morley to Minto, 13 July 1906. Morley MSS, vol. i.
[2] See pp. 292–3.
[3] Morley to Minto, 29 Aug. 1906. Morley MSS, vol. i.
[4] B.D. IV.328.
[5] Grant Duff to Grey, telegram No. 131, 9 May 1906. F.O. Print (Persia) vol. 8775, No. 113.
[6] B.D. IV.329, 330. [7] B.D. IV.221.

subject to this supervision; instead, he discussed the negotiations more informally with a small group of Ministers directly involved. Hardinge told Nicolson that his private letters went to Grey, Campbell-Bannerman, Ripon, Morley, and usually the King; and to this list of Ministers closely concerned should perhaps be added Asquith, who was, of course, directly interested in the financial aspects of the negotiations and seems to have been kept informed of the most important general developments. With these colleagues Grey had little trouble: Campbell-Bannerman, Ripon, and Asquith accepted the principle of the entente and, so far as can be ascertained, made no serious objection to Grey's policy at any stage of the negotiations.[1]

One of the important differences between negotiations with France and those with Russia was that in the latter Grey had to consult other government authorities. Both the Government of India and the India Office had to be given a voice in the projected Central Asian settlement. Morley was especially insistent on the rights of his office, against both the Viceroy and his colleagues in London. He assured Minto that 'I am not in the least inclined to let the F.O. decide affairs that are specially Indian, and on which India will have to smart if they go wrong'.[2] But Grey kept him fully informed, and Morley acknowledged that his 'invariable considerateness and free and constant consultation makes that all that intercourse between colleagues ought to be'.[3]

Of course the Russian entente had two aspects; and its local aspect, which, by its settlement of differences and withdrawal from commitments, was likely to appeal to Radicals, did not tell the whole story. To grasp the full meaning of the entente it was necessary to see it in the context of relations with France and Germany; and this Morley, who did not get the Foreign Office despatches, was not able to do.[4] His main reason for supporting Grey seems, in fact, to have been local: he was anxious for the diminution of Indian responsibilities to which an entente would lead. When the question of Indian reinforcements was raised again in the Committee of Imperial Defence by Clarke, Morley agreed

[1] Both Campbell-Bannerman and Ripon cordially congratulated Grey on the conclusion of the entente. Trevelyan, *Grey of Fallodon*, p. 189.
[2] Morley to Minto, 15 Aug. 1906. Morley MSS, vol. i.
[3] Morley to Asquith, 26 Sept. 1906. Ibid., Envelope B.
[4] See p. 307, n. 2, for notes on distribution of Foreign Office despatches.

with Haldane that the danger of Russian invasion had been removed and that military economies could be made. 'He was anxious', he declared, 'to educate the Government of India in these matters.'[1] When Clarke asked for a definite decision—which the Balfour government had never given—Morley retorted that the question seemed 'abstract and academic'.[2] These ideas were somewhat modified on further thought. In January 1907 he suggested to the Prime Minister the formation of a sub-committee on 'the military needs of the Empire'; he would himself be chairman, on the ground that 'India is the key; for the requirements of India govern the normal size of our army in peace'.[3] He was evidently unaware of the profound revolution wrought in military strategy by recognition of the need for military intervention on the Continent. The sub-committee reported in May that a war with Russia for possession of India would entail 'immense demands and vast sacrifices' and that 'a military organisation at home that would enable 100,000 men to be sent to India in the first year of war, appears a military necessity'.[4]

This unwelcome conclusion only increased Morley's desire to obtain a settlement of differences with Russia. He at once told Minto that it showed 'what a tremendous load of military charge and responsibility you have to carry if you won't come to terms diplomatically with Russia'.[5] The conclusion that reinforcements of 100,000 men would be necessary if war broke out was 'one fundamental argument for the Convention; for we have not got the men to spare and that's the plain truth of it'.[6] More generally, he never ceased to warn the reluctant Viceroy to avoid 'anything that looks like expansion, extension of protectorates, spheres of influence and the like; and anything with the savour of militarism

[1] Minutes of 9 March 1906, 85th meeting. C.I.D. Records, Cab. 2/2/1.

[2] Minutes of 88th meeting, 25 May 1906. Ibid. Morley was extremely suspicious of the C.I.D., telling Minto of his fear that 'a P.M. or a big Departmental Minister will go to his Cabinet with irresistible force, previously equipped by a body of experts in army and navy, and backed by formal and recorded opinions following specialised consultation and deliberation. So the Cabinet takes a secondary place' (1 Feb. 1906. Morley MSS, vol. i). Sinclair, another Radical member of the Cabinet, thought that the C.I.D. was 'a dangerous weapon, which is in the hands of the services to bully the Cabinet' (to Campbell-Bannerman, 8 Jan. 1907. Campbell-Bannerman MSS, Add. MSS 41230).

[3] Morley to Campbell-Bannerman, 6 Jan. 1907. Campbell-Bannerman MSS, Add. MSS 41223.

[4] Report of sub-committee as Paper 98D. 1 May 1907, C.I.D. Records, Cab. 6/3.

[5] Morley to Minto, 31 May 1907. Morley MSS, vol. ii.

[6] Morley to Minto, 19 Sept. 1907. Ibid.

about it'.[1] After the entente he told Grey that 'one of my chief grounds for warm assent to the Persian section of your Anglo-Russian Convention was that it seemed to open a door for my (unexpressed) policy of removing the Government of India further away, if not wholly, from Persian expenditure of all sorts'.[2]

Lansdowne had been held back in his pursuit of a Russian understanding by concern for the alliance with Japan. The Conservatives had regarded this as their finest achievement; the Liberals were indifferent, or even hostile, to it. Ripon, while admitting that 'the Treaty is signed and we are bound by it', disliked it, because it involved heavy commitments in China, encouraged a forward policy in India, and might produce conflict with other European powers, and especially with Germany in Shantung.[3] Campbell-Bannerman was also suspicious of it,[4] and even Grey was careful to declare that it must be regarded as a defensive pact.[5] It was, of course, irrelevant, or even an obstacle, to his new policy, and intimate contact between London and Tokyo ceased with the change of government. But the strongest opponent of the Japanese connection was Morley. He was alarmed in December 1906 by a dispute between Japan and the United States and told Minto that 'every day more loudly do I pour out imprecations on the second Anglo-Japanese Treaty—imprecations that began on the 12th August 1905, when the said Treaty was signed'.[6]

Although the desire to reduce commitments in India was probably the main reason for Morley's support of Grey's policy, it was not the only one. Morley was also deeply suspicious of Germany. He did not receive the despatches on relations with France and Germany, and probably just accepted what he was told in conversation. Certainly some of his suspicions of Germany have a rather improbable air, as if picked up in the course of gossip. On 29 August 1906, for example, he told Minto that

> the key to German diplomacy is to prevent anything like a triple entente of England, France and Russia. Her policy is expanded commerce. Her

[1] Morley to Minto, 16 Jan. 1906. Ibid., vol. i.
[2] Morley to Grey, 9 Oct. 1907. Grey MSS, vol. lix.
[3] Ripon to Spencer, 28 Sept. 1905. Ripon MSS, Add. MSS 43538.
[4] Campbell-Bannerman to John Ellis, 9 Oct. 1905. Campbell-Bannerman MSS, Add. MSS 41214.
[5] Trevelyan, *Grey of Fallodon*, p. 90.
[6] Morley to Minto, 13 Dec. 1906. Morley MSS, vol. i.

triumphant rival in this field is England. To weaken England, she will use the Russian and the Turk whenever she can. She increases her fleet in order to give courage to her merchants. For another reason also (which is rather new to me): the only great commercial field not already occupied is South America. On this Germany has her eye. So has the government of the United States as was plainly shown by the speeches of Mr. Root (their Foreign Secretary) at the Pan-American Congress the other day. Therefore Germany and the U.S.A. may sometime come to a naval tussle. What a long way I have travelled from Russia and the Amir. All I mean is that for the same reasons that make Germany seek coldness or a quarrel between us and Russia, we ought to do what we can to baulk her.[1]

3

Official discussions began on 29 May when Nicolson proposed that negotiations should start with Tibet.[2] Isvolsky agreed, and negotiations opened officially on 7 June.[3] But then they languished. Tibet itself never, at any stage of the discussions, presented much difficulty; but the accumulated resentments of past years and the contrast between the political systems of the two countries were obstacles difficult to overcome. Attacks on the Jews took place during the summer, and protests were made in the Commons[4]; Grey was driven to make unofficial representations to the Russian government.[5] When, on 22 July, the Czar dissolved the Duma, Campbell-Bannerman, addressing a deputation in London, declared 'la Douma est morte. Vive la Douma!' Hardinge feared that he had 'destroyed at one blow the edifice which we have been building up with so much care',[6] and Grey had to make a laboured explanation to Benckendorff.[7] This fear of liberal opinion in England persisted; and in October, when Parliament was about to meet again, Grey confided to Nicolson: 'I am not looking forward to it. The new members have now acquired the art of asking questions and raising debates and there is so much in foreign affairs which attracts attention and had much better be left alone.'[8]

[1] Morley to Minto, 29 Aug. 1906. Ibid.
[2] B.D. IV.221. [3] B.D. IV.224.
[4] Consul-General Murray to Grey, 17 June 1906. F.O. Print (Russia), vol. 8756, No. 44. Questions in House of Commons, 19, 20, 21 June. Ibid., Nos. 47, 48, 50, 51.
[5] Grey to Nicolson, 18 June 1906. Ibid., No. 42. Nicolson to Grey, 20 June 1906. Ibid., No. 49.
[6] Hardinge to Nicolson, 21 Aug. 1906. Carnock MSS, vol. '1906'.
[7] Lee, *King Edward VII*, vol. ii, pp. 566–8.
[8] Grey to Nicolson, 3 Oct. 1906. Grey MSS. vol. xxxiii.

But the Russian Government was unstable as well as repressive, and this instability discouraged even Hardinge and Grey.[1] It was at Nicolson's suggestion that the negotiations were continued in spite of this; and one of the reasons he gave was that 'I am anxious as to German movements and aims in Persia. . . . I think that we should endeavour, as soon as possible, to come to an arrangement as to Persia before Germany has any ostensible pretext for interference.'[2] It was the fear of Germany dominating the course of the negotiations which now, at the beginning of September, suddenly brought them back to life. On 31 August Isvolsky revealed to Nicolson that the Persians had again applied to him for money and, again rebuffed, had threatened to turn to Germany. Both men agreed that 'it was desirable that they [Britain and Russia] should work together without the intervention of third parties', and Isvolsky revived Grey's plan for a joint Anglo-Russian loan to the Persians.[3] Although Hardinge, writing to Nicolson on 7 August, had proposed to mark time in the negotiations for two months,[4] the British at once took up Isvolsky's proposal. Grey hurried back to London to see Morley. He later explained to the Prime Minister that 'my fear was that, if we refused Isvolsky's request he might, rather than let Germany lend alone, join with Germany in a loan. We should then find Germany and Russia partners against us in Persia and any chance of a future arrangement with Russia would be gone.'[5] Morley's first reaction was, however, discouraging. While admitting 'the awkardness of seeing Russia joining hands with Germany', he asked Grey: 'How can I—who am just opening a gilded[?] crusade for thrift at every turn—approve what may be a very risky speculation?'[6] But under further persuasion from Grey he changed his mind, explaining to Minto that 'the key to the matter lies in the attempt of Germany to get her finger into the Persian pie—first as a step in the general World Policy; second, by way of complicating attempts at an *entente* between us and Russia'.[7] Morley offered £100,000 from Indian funds, and

[1] B.D. IV.227. Hardinge to Nicolson, 7 August 1906. Carnock MSS, vol. '1906'.
[2] Nicolson to Hardinge, 29 July 1906. Hardinge MSS, vol. viii.
[3] B.D. IV.336.
[4] Hardinge to Nicolson, 7 Aug. 1906. Carnock MSS, vol. '1906'.
[5] Grey to Campbell-Bannerman, 13 Sept. 1906. Campbell-Bannerman MSS, Add. MSS 41218. Grey concluded: 'I wish I could have consulted you first, but the matter admitted of no delay.'
[6] Morley to Grey, 4 Sept. 1906. Grey MSS, vol. lix.
[7] Morley to Minto, 20 Sept. 1906. Morley MSS, vol. i.

Asquith found the same sum from the Imperial exchequer.[1] Grey therefore agreed on 3 September to examine the possibility of a joint loan with the Russians.[2] Isvolsky continued to show great anxiety about German activity, and on the 8th, telling Nicolson about another report of a German loan, emphasised once again that 'it is essential that no time should be lost by the British and Russian Governments in blocking the project by making an advance in common'.[3]

The British decided to make use of Isvolsky's desire for haste to press on with the more general entente negotiations. There was still no advance on Tibet; but on 7 September Nicolson was authorised to open discussion on Afghanistan and to receive proposals on Persia.[4] Even this acceleration seemed insufficient. It had been assumed that discussion of Afghanistan would be initiated before that of Persia,[5] but Nicolson, in view of the German threat, had wanted this order reversed[6]; and on 12 September Grey agreed with him that 'what we desire is to render the joint loan something in the nature of a general settlement, respecting Persia with the Imperial Government', and informed him of the British terms for this general settlement. She would expect as her sphere of influence the country east of a line from Bunder Abbas to Birjand (that is, Seistan and Persian Baluchistan), and Russia was invited to formulate her own demands. The British even hinted that it might be possible to allow Russia some access to the Gulf.[7] Isvolsky replied on the 17th and 24th that he himself would accept this, but that he would have to combat objections from his colleagues. He would ask for the northern half of Persia as Russia's sphere, leaving the intervening area open to general enterprise.[8]

These proposals for the virtual partition of Persia ran counter to the theories propounded by Balfour, and they called into being a powerful coalition opposed to Grey's Russian policy. Fitzmaurice, Grey's own Under-Secretary (and Lansdowne's brother) could not overcome an instinctive distrust of the Russians; and,

[1] Asquith to Campbell-Bannerman, 16 Sept. 1906. Campbell-Bannerman MSS, Add. MSS 41210. [2] B.D. IV.337.
[3] Nicolson to Grey, telegram No. 213, 8 Sept. 1906. F.O. Print [Persia], vol. 8802, No. 154.
[4] B.D. IV.341. [5] B.D. IV. 226.
[6] Nicolson to Hardinge, 29 July 1906. Hardinge MSS, vol. viii.
[7] Grey to Nicolson, 12 Sept. 1906. F.O. Print (Persia), vol. 8802, No. 167.
[8] B.D. IV.347, 349.

more important still, he sensed the connection between Grey's Russian and German policies. Already in May he had told Lascelles:

> I am very anxious about our relations with Germany. A loyal attempt has to be made to improve our relations with Russia; but with the absolute uncertainty of the future there, both in regard to institutions and individuals, nobody can tell whether a rapprochement will be possible or permanent.
>
> Apart from this, I have always a profound doubt how far Russia is able to control her own agents, civil as well as military, in foreign parts. . . . Therefore, we must not rely too much on a Russian understanding—at least according to my view—; and in any case it ought not to exclude good relations with Germany, if such are possible.[1]

The Government of India maintained an attitude of unswerving opposition to the principle of the entente. There had already been a conflict in the summer over Afghanistan. Morley had suggested that the Russians could be conceded their long-standing demand for local relations with the Afghans, but Minto objected that 'if they were allowed it would at once become impossible to know what is going on and one could not guarantee their non-political complexion'. Nevertheless, this concession appeared in Nicolson's instructions,[2] and was incorporated into the final settlement. At the same time Minto had argued that Britain was militarily weaker in Central Asia than Russia, and that the entente, which could not last for ever, would continue this inequality. He had also pointed to its effect upon Japan. 'In the face of our alliance with her, and her position in respect to Russia, are we justified in accepting an agreement with Russia which must seriously interfere with the value of our position on Russia's flank should she and Russia again come to blows?'[3]

It was the opposition of the Government of India which made

[1] Fitzmaurice to Lascelles, 31 May 1906. Lascelles MSS, vol. iii, Part 5. Later Fitzmaurice also agreed with Spring-Rice's criticism. 'What I am *really* afraid of is the possible effect on opinion both in Persia and in India if the idea gets about that we have made a division of Persia with Russia and have given the Mohammedans away to the Giaours' (Fitzmaurice to Lascelles, 9 June 1907. Lascelles MSS, ibid.). He also declared that he was 'a believer in the tendency of the three Emperors to gravitate back to a common understanding—hostile to liberty—notwithstanding any engagements which may bind them on particular subjects to other Powers' (Fitzmaurice to Grey, 20 July 1906. Grey MSS, vol. liii).

[2] B.D. IV.472.

[3] Minto to Morley, 12 June 1906. Morley MSS, vol. i.

the support of Morley so important to Grey. Had Morley supported Minto, there would have been a fundamental conflict of interests, which could only have been resolved, if at all, by the entire Cabinet. Grey later acknowledged that Morley's support was indispensable to the making of the entente.[1] And he was fortunate too that Morley was so insistent upon his rights, and those of the Imperial Government—Churchill called him a 'martinet' in the India Office.[2] He had, for example, replied to Minto's Afghan protest that 'H.M.'s Government, with almost universal support in public opinion have decided to make such attempts as Russian circumstances may permit, to arrange an entente. . . . H.M.'s Government have determined on their course, and it is for their agents and officers all over the world to accept it.'[3]

Morley's rebuff did not, however, prevent a vigorous and comprehensive onslaught on Grey's Persian policy by the Government of India. On 19 September, in a private letter to Morley, Minto wrote:

> I would rather maintain our influence in the Gulf and in South Persia as affording us strategical advantages, which are evident, rather than sacrifice those advantages for the prospective friendship of foreign Powers. I hope you won't think me very prejudiced, but personally I put no faith whatever upon the honesty of Russian diplomacy or on the reliability of Russian promises.[4]

Fitzmaurice thought these arguments 'very strong' and pointed out that Russian access to the Gulf would violate the Lansdowne declaration of May 1903.[5] More important was the reaction of the King, who at once told Grey that the Viceroy's arguments 'appear convincing' and warned Hardinge that 'if Foreign Office does not act in unison with Viceroy of India matters might be very serious, as Russian diplomacy never varies'.[6] Grey replied that the inclusion of southwest Persia in the British sphere could not be attained by diplomacy and that 'it would have to be secured by

[1] Grey to Campbell-Bannerman, 31 Aug. 1907. Grey MSS, vol. lxi. To Ripon, 8 Sept. 1907. Ripon MSS, Add. MSS 43640.
[2] Sir Winston Churchill, *Great Contemporaries*, p. 98.
[3] Morley of Blackburn, *Recollections*, vol. ii, pp. 177–8. Morley did not print in his book those letters showing hostility to Germany.
[4] Minto to Morley, 19 Sept. 1906. Morley MSS, vol. i.
[5] Fitzmaurice to Grey, 22 Sept. 1906. Grey MSS, vol. liii.
[6] Lee, *King Edward VII*, vol. ii, p. 569.

independent action and eventually by occupation of the whole of Southern Persia, a very serious addition to Imperial responsibilities'. Control of Seistan would be sufficient to protect India, and even a Russian demand for access to the Gulf 'should not be negatived in principle, but become the subject of discussion'.[1] Grey was supported by Morley, Campbell-Bannerman,[2] and Asquith,[3] and with the support of the leading members of the Cabinet he was able to defeat the opposition, which came from outside the Cabinet. But the opposition of the Government of India persisted, and so too did the doubts, less comprehensive and more instinctive, of Edward VII. The Foreign Office resorted to what seems to have been common practice under the new government and withheld some of the relevant documents from the critics. Hardinge told Nicolson in July 1907 that 'recently we have left the Government of India entirely out of our account, and the questions which have arisen have been treated directly between us and the India Office, reference being made only to the Prime Minister and Lord Ripon'.[4] The King's attitude was less sweeping and the general idea of a Russian settlement attracted him—he sent warm congratulations to Nicolson on its conclusion[5]—but on Persia, the most important question at issue, he continued to disagree with Grey. Hardinge therefore told Nicolson that 'whether I am here or not your letters go the round of Grey, C[ampbell-]B[annerman], Lord Ripon and John Morley and generally the King, but some caution has to be observed as to what goes to H.M.'[6].

4

Fear of Germany again came to the fore when at the end of October Isvolsky visited Berlin. He stated frankly that to avoid a repetition of the Moroccan incident Germany must be consulted[7]; and Nicolson expressed 'misgivings',[8] again urging an acceleration of the

[1] B.D. IV.350.

[2] 'Even Persia stands well with your last despatch which puts Isvolsky on his honour by our joining in the first advance.' Campbell-Bannerman to Grey, 4 Oct. 1906. Grey MSS, vol. lxi.

[3] 'I see that . . . the government of India are almost in hysterics over suggested delimitations of interest in Persia.' Asquith to Grey, 23 Sept. 1906. Grey MSS, vol. lxii.

[4] Hardinge to Nicolson, 10 July. 1907. Carnock MSS, vol. '1907', Pt. i.

[5] B.D. IV.520.

[6] Hardinge to Nicolson, 16 Oct. 1906. Carnock MSS, vol. '1906'.

[7] B.D. IV.230.

[8] Nicolson to Hardinge, 24 Oct. 1906. Hardinge MSS, vol. viii.

negotiations to forestall Germany.[1] Grey agreed with Nicolson's tactics and described himself also as 'suspicious' of the visit.[2] At the same time Spring-Rice, who had just arrived in Tehran as Minister, gave warning that the Persians, apprehensive of an Anglo-Russian agreement at their expense, might well turn to Germany.[3] Just as the future seemed dark with uncertainty, once again largely because of fear of German intervention, tension was suddenly relieved when the Germans themselves told Isvolsky that they had no objection to the projected entente. They had no desire to establish a bank in Persia, or to expand their interests there.[4] Isvolsky and Grey were then able to drop their offer of a loan; they were all the more anxious to do so because in October the Persian revolutionaries had forced the Shah to call a National Assembly, which was likely to be offended by a subsidy for the Imperial Government.[5]

Fear of Germany and suspicion of a Russo-German *rapprochement* were not entirely overcome by the assurances from Berlin. Nicolson in January 1907 was still anxious about German intervention in Persia,[6] and a little later reported that Isvolsky was also.[7] In May 1907 there was a sudden scare that Aehrenthal, the Austrian Foreign Minister, was trying to resurrect the *Dreikaiserbund*,[8] and Fitzmaurice found his suspicion that the three Eastern Empires would tend to come together confirmed.[9] Even in August, when the entente was all but concluded, Hardinge was 'very uncomfortable' about a coming meeting at Swinemünde between the Czar and Kaiser because 'the Kaiser is enterprising and Isvolsky is entirely under his thumb'.[10] It is plain that the negotiations were dominated from beginning to end by fear of Germany.

But the main obstacle had been removed by Isvolsky's cordial reception at Berlin. In February 1907 a Russian ministerial conference authorised Isvolsky to proceed,[11] and on the 20th he gave

[1] Nicolson to Grey, 24 Oct. 1906. Grey MSS, vol. xxxiii.
[2] B.D. IV.235.
[3] Spring-Rice to Grey, 12 Oct. 1906. Grey MSS, vol. xxxi.
[4] B.D. IV.367–9.
[5] R. P. Churchill, *The Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907*, pp. 239–40.
[6] Nicolson to Hardinge, 3 Jan. 1907. Hardinge MSS, vol. x.
[7] Nicolson to Grey, 13 Feb. 1907. Grey MSS, vol. xxxiii.
[8] Goschen to Hardinge, 23 May; memo by Hardinge, 27 May; Hardinge to Goschen, 28 May 1907. Hardinge MSS, vol. x.
[9] Fitzmaurice to Nicolson, 27 June 1907. Carnock MSS, vol. '1907', Pt. i.
[10] Hardinge to Bertie, 3 Aug. 1907. Bertie MSS, Series A.
[11] B.D. IV.248, and editorial note.

Nicolson a draft convention on Persia which the British found substantially acceptable.[1] At the same time Nicolson communicated the British Afghan proposals; because of the fear of Germany, they had, after all, followed virtual agreement on Persia.[2] The remaining negotiations were largely concerned with details: Russia demanded only the north of Persia as her sphere, leaving an intermediate belt between that and the British sphere in Seistan; in Afghanistan she accepted the limited concession of local and non-political relations with the Afghans, and recognised the country as outside her sphere of influence; she recognised also Britain's special interest in Tibet, but both Powers agreed not to intervene in Tibet's internal affairs.

Only two questions raised any difficulty. In July the Government of India protested once again against the meagre size of the proposed British sphere in Persia, and demanded that the final agreement should in some way recognise British interests in the Gulf.[3] The King again came to their support. 'He does not consider that what Lord Lansdowne said was, under the circumstances, too strong,' wrote Knollys, and 'he wishes it to be placed on record that, according to his view, it is a mistake to give way.'[4] Nicolson had already reported that Isvolsky was unwilling to give an assurance on the Gulf through fear of Germany[5]; but Grey and Ripon thought the language of the Lansdowne declaration too menacing,[6] and they decided not to insist on an insertion of a reference to the Gulf in the convention itself.[7] Hardinge explained, however, to Nicolson that some mention of British interests in the Gulf must be made to prevent the Conservatives joining the Radicals in opposition to the entente,[8] and in the end a separate assertion of British interests in the Gulf was published with the convention.

The only other episode of importance concerned the Rule of the Straits. Nicolson warned Grey in November 1906 that some concession there might be necessary to overcome the opposition of the Russian military.[9] Grey replied that Britain would examine a change in the Rule of the Straits but that 'it is for him [Isvolsky] to say what he wants'.[10] The previous government had already

[1] B.D. IV.389–90. [2] B.D. IV.390. [3] B.D. IV.448.
[4] Knollys to Hardinge, 12 July 1907. Hardinge MSS, vol. ix.
[5] B.D. IV.428. [6] B.D. IV.444. [7] Ibid.
[8] Hardinge to Nicolson, 26 June 1907. Carnock MSS, vol. '1907', Pt. i.
[9] B.D. IV.236. [10] B.D. IV.370.

decided to make this concession, and Hardinge at once referred to this fact in a memorandum.[1] He was himself in favour of it, partly, he told Bertie, because 'it would upset the Germans very much'.[2] But when the subject was officially raised by Benckendorff, Grey replied that the moment was inopportune, because public opinion would be uneasy, because Britain would expect in return a recognition of her interests in the Near East, and because Germany would have to be consulted.[3] He did however assure Benckendorff that 'if the negotiations now in progress between the two Governments with regard to Asiatic questions had a satisfactory result, the effect upon British public opinion would be such as very much to facilitate a discussion of the Straits question if it came up later on'.[4] This formula was accepted by Isvolsky.

The Straits question emphasised the most important fact about the entente: that it was not merely a settlement of colonial differences but also part of a general re-alignment on policies. Grey returned to this point, again with reference to the Near East, after the conclusion of the entente.

> I am quite pleased, from the point of view of general policy, that events are bringing Russia and us together. But a combination of Britain, Russia and France in the Concert must for the present be a weak one. France has her hands full in Morocco, and is naturally reluctant to run the risk of even diplomatic friction in connection with any other matter which might re-act unfavourably on her in Morocco. Russia is weak after the war, and her internal affairs are anything but secure.
>
> Ten years hence, a combination of Britain, Russia and France may be able to dominate Near Eastern policy; and within that time events will probably make it more and more clear that it is to the interest of Russia and us to work together: but we must go slowly.[5]

[1] B.D. IV, pp. 58–60.
[2] Hardinge to Bertie, 18 March 1907. Bertie MSS, Series A.
[3] B.D. IV.258. [4] B.D. IV.268. [5] B.D. IV.550.

12

Relations with France and Germany, 1906–1907

1

GREY had several times promised that if the Germans were conciliatory at Algeciras relations with them would at once improve[1]; and now that the conference had ended successfully, and largely as the result of German concessions, the way was apparently open for him to carry out his intentions. But almost as soon as the Moroccan crisis was over he was plunged into another. The Sultan of Turkey had occupied some disputed land at Akaba on the Turco-Egyptian frontier and refused to move. Cromer was afraid that he intended to raise the whole Egyptian question, probably with German backing, and pressed the home government to take stern action. What had begun as a minor frontier incident became, by the end of April, a major crisis as the Turks refused with unexpected obstinacy to give way. It was only when confronted with an ultimatum threatening force that Abdul Hamid agreed, on 13 May, to climb down. The British had won their point, but they had had a severe fright: they had been forced to contemplate war with the Sultan, and the Admiralty had discovered that in fact there was little they could do to coerce him.[2] At the same time, Cromer was alarmed by the strength of pan-Islamic feeling in Egypt,[3] and the Government of India was afraid of a Mohammedan uprising there if the Sultan proclaimed a 'holy war'.[4] With Germany's ostentatious patronage of the Turks and her plans to extend her influence into Persia, another Mohammedan area threatened by Grey's policy, an alarming prospect opened up before the British and once

[1] Grey to Lascelles, 1 Jan. 1906. Grey MSS, vol. xxii. B.D. III.229, 348.
[2] Minutes of 87th meeting of C.I.D., 11 May 1906. C.I.D. records. Cab. 2/2/1.
[3] Cromer to Grey, 16 May 1906. Grey MSS, vol. vii.
[4] Morley to Campbell-Bannerman, 11 May 1906. Campbell-Bannerman MSS, Add. MSS 41223.

again Germany seemed to be the source of the danger. Hardinge and Crowe agreed with Cromer that she was probably behind the Sultan in the Akaba affair,[1] and even comparatively friendly observers like Fitzmaurice and Ripon believed that 'the Germans are going to give us trouble along the whole line'.[2] The policy of greater co-operation with Germany had received a check at the outset. The need for continuing vigilance against German designs was one lesson drawn from the crisis by those who were already uneasy at the prospect of a *rapprochement*. Another was that Grey would always be faced by a section of the Cabinet opposed to warlike measures. Although Grey was supported by the Prime Minister,[3] Morley deprecated 'troublesome and costly measures of coercion',[4] and Loreburn also made difficulties in Cabinet.[5] Hardinge was relieved that the most important decision of the crisis had to be taken on a Sunday, when the Cabinet was out of town, and looked with dread to the day 'when Grey finds himself face to face with the peace at any price section of the Cabinet headed by the Lord Chancellor'.[6]

But after this initial setback Anglo-German relations did begin to improve. A strong party was determined to bring the hostility and tension of the Moroccan crisis to an end. Fitzmaurice was already advocating this,[7] and Hardinge told Lascelles, sincerely as it turned out, that he was 'really anxious to see an end put to this continual backbiting'.[8] The King, too, had veered away from his hostility of the previous autumn, and was establishing once again friendly, indeed inconveniently friendly, relations with his nephew the Kaiser. They had exchanged friendly messages in January and February,[9] and on 31 January Hardinge and Mallet had agreed to keep from Edward a suggestion from the Minister

[1] Hardinge to the King, 27 March 1906. Hardinge MSS, vol. ix, Hardinge to Grey, 18 April 1906, Grey MSS. vol. liii. According to Cambon, Hardinge complained to Metternich of German encouragement of the Sultan (D.D.F. X.51).

[2] Fitzmaurice to Ripon, 18 April 1906, and Ripon to Fitzmaurice, 20 April 1906. Ripon MSS, Add. MSS 43543. This sentiment was Fitzmaurice's; and Ripon agreed that 'you are only too right about the German game'.

[3] Campbell-Bannerman to Grey, 1 May 1906. Grey MSS, vol. lxi.

[4] Minutes of 87th meeting of C.I.D., 11 May 1906. C.I.D. Records, Cab. 2/2/1.

[5] Ripon to Campbell-Bannerman, 27 April 1906. Campbell-Bannerman MSS, Add. MSS 41225.

[6] Hardinge to Lascelles, 16 May 1906. Lascelles MSS, vol. iii, Part 5.

[7] See pp. 289–90.

[8] Hardinge to Lascelles, 22 April 1906. Lascelles MSS, vol. iii, Part 5.

[9] Lee, *King Edward VII*, vol. ii, pp. 524–8. Edward told Cambon that the Kaiser's letter was 'charmante et affectueuse'. D.D.F. IX–I.220.

in Denmark that the King and Kaiser could meet in Copenhagen on the occasion of Christian IX's funeral.[1] But then, at the beginning of March, when the success of the Algeciras conference was still doubtful, the King had caused consternation in the Foreign Office by announcing his intention to visit the Kaiser in the Mediterranean during the spring. Hardinge had described his attitude to Bertie as 'not very satisfactory', and it was only after the exercise of strong pressure from Grey, Hardinge, and Bertie as well as tactful persuasion from Knollys that he had been made to abandon the idea.[2] After the successful outcome of the conference, however, Hardinge swung round to support Edward. He revived the plans for a Mediterranean meeting, only to be met by the reply that the Kaiser had no plans for making a cruise that year.[3] But apparently this answer was not seriously regarded as a rebuff, and the King proposed instead that they should meet on the Continent during his annual journey to Marienbad. This suggestion was transmitted to the Germans through Haldane, who impressed upon Metternich (who had heard the same from other sources) that the King 'sei von dem dringenden Wunsch erfüllt, wieder zu guten Beziehungen zu Deutschland zu gelangen'.[4] Knollys indeed went further, and suggested an invitation to the Kaiser to visit Windsor in November—a proposal regarded with favour by the King.[5] Knollys tried to soothe the inevitable Foreign Office fears by declaring that the two monarchs need not discuss Anglo-German relations; but he also warned that 'it would be advisable not to neglect any chance, even a remote one, of endeavouring to conciliate a man who has so much power in his hands for good or evil'.[6]

At the same time there were many unofficial or semi-official demonstrations of friendship between the two countries. A party of German mayors visited England in May, and a party of journalists in June. On both occasions there was much earnest and enthusiastic talk of the need for better Anglo-German understanding, and the journalists were welcomed by two Cabinet Ministers, Bryce and Loreburn, regarded by Metternich as, with Haldane,

[1] Johnstone to Mallet, 31 Jan. 1906, and minute by Mallet. Grey MSS, vol. vi.
[2] Hardinge to Bertie, 2 March 1906. Hardinge MSS, vol. viii. Mallet to Bertie, 2 March 1906. Bertie MSS, Series A. Memo by Bertie, 4 March 1906. Ibid., Series B.
[3] Hardinge to Lascelles, 8 May 1906. Lascelles MSS, vol. iii, Part 5.
[4] G.P. XXI–II.7186.
[5] Knollys to Haldane, 22 May 1906, Haldane MSS, MS 5907.
[6] Knollys to Mallet, 18 June 1906. Grey MSS, vol. lxiv.

the most pro-German members of the government.[1] Loreburn's speech omitted Grey's customary qualifications about the need to preserve the entente, declared that 'it was the duty of all good citizens in Great Britain to do everything they could to maintain friendship with Germany', and made a probably indiscreet reference to the time when they had been 'in the same battle line'.[2]

Haldane was active in the same direction. He had just visited Germany privately and been touched by his reception there,[3] and in May was invited to pay another visit in his official capacity to examine German military organisation.[4] He had frequent and friendly conversations with members of the German Embassy. In May he twice told Metternich that he was anxious for better relations, and spoke with sympathetic understanding of Germany's desire for expansion[5]; he even spoke to Stumm of the possibility of a quadruple grouping of Britain, France, Russia, and Germany to allow her to satisfy this desire in Asia Minor.[6] In June he went so far as to suggest to Grey that he should do as the Germans wished and induce France to be more friendly towards Germany.[7]

But a large part of the Foreign Office regarded this movement towards a *rapprochement* with aversion. Eyre Crowe, who had just become a Senior Clerk, was establishing himself as the ablest member of the anti-German party; all his minutes show unwavering suspicion of every development of German policy. He had declared in January that if Germany was given the chance to realise the programme of the pan-German movement, 'the opportunity would be seized by the German government with all its wonted energy',[8] and he further declared in June that, in the German view, 'good relations are to be obtained with England only by the establishment of German hegemony'.[9] He watched the German visits to England, and their warm reception there, with alarm, regarding them as part of a German attempt to separate England and France and regretting that 'English public men' should have been 'exploited' to this end. This nightmare of German division of the entente never left him, and he believed that it was always better to

[1] G.P. XXI–II.7191. [2] *The Times*, 22 June 1906, p. 5.
[3] Haldane to his mother, 14 April and 16 April 1906. Haldane MSS, MS 5975.
[4] B.D. III.415.
[5] G.P. XXI–II.7180–1. [6] G.P. XXI–II.7185.
[7] Memo by Mallet, 26 June 1906. Grey MSS, vol. liii. Not printed in the *British Documents*.
[8] B.D. III.413. [9] Minute on B.D. III.418.

be firm than to be conciliatory to the Germans.[1] Mallet still believed that 'the German government have not changed the whole of their policy—i.e., that they have not abandoned their fixed determination to draw France within their orbit and to dictate to them their foreign policy from Berlin'.[2] A newcomer to the anti-German party was G. S. Spicer, an Assistant Clerk, who left minutes on most of the important papers and in September wrote a memorandum to show that for Germany 'expansion at the expense of someone else is almost a necessity'.[3]

Grey tended to adopt the advice of this section of the Office. Perhaps the very fact that a section of the public and some of his colleagues were trying to push him into a more friendly policy towards Germany made him obstinate and suspicious: he described the current manifestations of friendship as 'gush' which it was not easy to prevent,[4] and refrained from meeting the German journalists while they were in England.[5] The fact was that his original intention to cultivate more cordial relations with Germany seemed impossible to carry out, at least unless he gave up other parts of his policy to which he attached greater importance. There was the Akaba crisis; there were reported German intrigues in Persia; and there was the resignation of Lamsdorff in May, which the British attributed to German machinations. Above all, there was the overriding need to preserve a close entente with France, the first object of Grey's policy.

Grey had assumed that an Anglo-German *rapprochement* could safely follow a successful conclusion of the Algeciras conference. The fact that, in his view, this proved not to be so led him to examine more closely the assumptions lying behind his policy; pressure from outside had the same effect. The result was that the summer of 1906 saw a further clarification of his policy. Germany was now definitely identified as the threat to the European balance. 'The Germans', he minuted on 9 June, 'do not realise that England has always drifted or deliberately gone into opposition to any Power which establishes a hegemony in Europe.'[6] All the elements in his policy—his support for the entente, his search

[1] B.D. III.419.
[2] Memo by Mallet, 26 June 1906. Grey MSS, vol. liii.
[3] Minute by Spicer, 5 Sept. 1906. F.O. 371/79. Spicer succeeded Crowe as Senior Clerk in 1912.
[4] Minute by Grey at B.D. III.419.
[5] B.D. III.420. [6] B.D. III.418.

for a Russian agreement, his determination to uphold the balance of power—now fell into place.

Although Grey never acknowledged it, this definition of his policy deprived his earlier desire for better relations with Germany of all its impetus. From now on, his anxiety was always, not that relations with Germany were bad, but that they might become too good. He did not act upon Haldane's suggestion that he should press the French to be more conciliatory towards the Germans—a suggestion condemned by Mallet as playing into the Germans' hands.[1] He obtained the rejection of Knollys's plan that the Kaiser should be invited to England that year.[2] He told Cambon that he opposed the meeting on the Continent between the King and Kaiser upon which the King was insisting and that he would advise Edward not to invite the Kaiser to England until the latter showed himself more friendly to France.[3] But above all he used the most far-reaching language to the French in order to allay their fears of an Anglo-German *rapprochement*. When on 20 June Cambon stated that the King's meeting with the Kaiser on the Continent would cause apprehension in France, Grey assured him that 'if anything arose which made it necessary to choose between France and Germany, public opinion here would be as decided on the French side as ever'.[4] A further French inquiry came on 9 July, after the Germans had, with strange lack of prudence, told them that an Anglo-German entente was being established. Once again Grey said that, while he wished to be on good relations with Germany, 'if we were called on to take sides, we must take sides with France as at Algeciras'.[5] These assurances by Grey were his first official recognition of the changed conception of the entente introduced when he took office: they were promises extending in scope to the entire policies of Britain and France, not limited, as those of 1904 had been, to Morocco, or as Grey's own promises in January 1906 had been, on Sanderson's advice. There is some indication, even, that Grey's objection to a full alliance was not fundamental,

[1] Memo by Mallet, 26 June 1906. Grey MSS, vol. liii.
[2] Grey to Lascelles, 27 June 1906. Grey MSS, vol. xxii.
[3] D.D.F. X.120.
[4] Memo by Grey, 20 June 1906. Grey MSS, vol. x. Not printed in the *British Documents*.
[5] B.D. III.420. D.D.F. X.144. 'Nous ne demandons qu'à vivre en bons termes avec l'Allemagne, mais cela dépend de cette Puissance: il ne faut pas qu'elle oblige l'opinion publique anglaise à prendre parti entre la France et elle parce qu'alors on verserait du côté de la France.'

as he later claimed, but tactical: a minute in September declared that 'the difficulty of making an alliance with France now is that Germany might attack France at once, while Russia is helpless fearing lest when Russia recovered she (Germany) should be crushed by a new Triple Alliance against her. She might make an alliance between us and France a pretext for doing this as her only chance of securing the future.'[1]

Grey's statements to Cambon did no more than reflect a radical change in the nature of the entente. Under Lansdowne its purpose had been to protect British interests; and where those interests had demanded it, as in the Far East, Lansdowne had ignored France. Now its purpose was to protect France against Germany in order to maintain the European balance of power; the preservation of French strength became in itself essential to British security, and so any serious disagreement with France was out of the question. Britain was in fact bound to France, even when, as in March 1906, Grey himself had thought that she was being unreasonable.

2

The most impressive displays of renewed friendship with Germany were still to come. Grey's doubts were overcome, and on 15 August the King, with Hardinge, met the Kaiser and Tchirsky, the new German Foreign Minister, at Cronberg. This time the personal encounter between the two monarchs was a success, and the growing friendship between them was encouraged.[2] Hardinge's political discussions (in which the King did not participate) were also friendly. Hardinge assured Tchirsky that German friendship was not incompatible with the French and Russian ententes and looked forward to a continuance of the recent improvement in Anglo-German relations; and both the Kaiser and Tchirsky, although perhaps a little querulous, impressed Hardinge by their friendliness. Hardinge in fact left Cronberg with the conviction that 'they now seem at last to realise that friendly relations with us cannot be at the expense of our "entente" with France'.[3] He repeated in a minute in September that 'the German government have appar-

[1] B.D. III.439.

[2] The King on his return caused some anxiety to Cambon by the friendliness of his attitude to the Germans. D.D.F. X.203.

[3] B.D. III.425.

ently renounced the idea of driving a wedge into the "entente", finding it useless to do so, and now advocate an "entente à trois" '.[1] While Hardinge continued to accept the main assumption of the new policy—that British diplomacy should be based upon an extended entente with France, supplemented by one with Russia—his reaction to the Cronberg meeting did mark him out from the extreme anti-German party among the permanent officials. Mallet at once reported to Bertie that Hardinge believed the Germans 'are sincerely anxious to be friends!' His own opinions remained firm. 'The Emperor let the cat out of the bag by suggesting that our position in France would enable us to bring France and Germany together!'[2] As Mallet expected, Bertie's reply heaped scorn upon Hardinge. 'My comment is, "quem William vult perdere, prius dementat". Whenever the anaesthetic takes effect we shall be operated on. When we wake up we shall find we were fools to believe what the surgeon said and that we are crippled. Really I should have thought better of Hardinge's intelligence.'[3] The Bertie-Hardinge alliance, which had dominated the internal history of the Office for the past few years, was at an end: in October the two men had a sharp personal dispute.[4] But, although Bertie, Mallet, and (as it soon appeared) Crowe remained steadfast, the Cronberg meeting and its sequel was a considerable success for those who wanted closer relations with Germany. This was what Fitzmaurice told Lascelles. 'Things are certainly better than they were—nevertheless the anti-German current in the Office still flows, though it has been checked.'[5]

After a brief interval, it was followed by another demonstration of friendship. Haldane had accepted the German invitation in time for their military manoeuvres at the end of August; and he cast himself in the rôle of peacemaker. 'It is a great policy,' he told his mother, 'one of peace and goodwill.'[6] He overcame the King's fear that a civilian would be inappropriate at military manoeuvres by the argument that 'the King is himself doing a great thing towards better relations by his impending journey of this month and it

[1] Minute by Hardinge, 5 Sept. 1906. F.O. 371/79.
[2] Mallet to Bertie, 24 Aug. 1906. Bertie MSS, Series A.
[3] Bertie to Mallet, 25 August 1906. Ibid.
[4] Hardinge to Bertie, 6 Oct. and 12 Oct. 1906; Bertie to Hardinge, 9 Oct. and 15 Oct. 1906. Ibid., Series B.
[5] Fitzmaurice to Lascelles, 21 Sept. 1906. Lascelles MSS, vol. iii, Part 5.
[6] Haldane to his mother, 3 Aug. 1906. Haldane MSS, MS 5976.

would be a pity even to risk spoiling this'.[1] But then Grey intervened himself. The French had pointed out to him that an annual review in commemoration of Sedan was a part of the military manoeuvres, and Grey telegraphed to Haldane on the 28th: 'I think you must avoid being present at the review; it would be better to give up the visit if this cannot be avoided in any other way.'[2] On receiving this telegram, Haldane consulted the King and Prime Minister and obtained their authorisation for his reply alleging that the French were mistaken, and that although he would not attend the Sedan celebration he would proceed with the visit.[3] But on the 31st Cambon warned Spring-Rice that Haldane's visit would provide material for those who wished to drive a wedge between England and France.[4] In Paris, Bourgeois gave Bertie the same warning, and Spicer, in a minute, agreed that the Germans would 'make the most they can of Mr. Haldane's presence at the present moment in Berlin'.[5] Bertie announced that he supported the French protest[6] and reminded Grey that 'the Nationalist party and many Royalists were formerly in favour of an understanding with Germany and that an agitation for such a policy might easily be started again if the French public were led to suspect that H.M.G. contemplated an agreement with Germany'. He also repeated his favourite argument that Britain should 'do nothing to facilitate an understanding between Germany and France; for it is difficult to conceive how an understanding of any real importance between these two countries could be satisfactory to Germany without being detrimental to our interests'.[7]

Grey thought the French objections were 'too wholesale'[8]; but he was still afraid that they were genuine. He ordered that a communiqué should be given to the press 'directly anything untoward appears in either the German or French Press, more particularly in the former',[9] and he warned Haldane to beware the celebrations devoted to the Sedan anniversary. It was probably at his instiga-

[1] Haldane to Knollys, 9 Aug. 1906. Haldane MSS, MS 5907.
[2] Grey to Haldane, telegram, 28 Aug. 1906. Grey MSS, vol. lxiii.
[3] Haldane to Grey, telegram, 29 Aug. 1906. Ibid.
[4] B.D. III.432.
[5] Bertie to Grey, telegram No. 78, 31 Aug. 1906, and minute by Spicer. F.O. 371/78.
[6] Bertie to Grey, 30 Aug. 1906. Grey MSS, vol. x.
[7] B.D. III.438.
[8] Minute by Grey on Bertie to Grey, telegram No. 76, 30 Aug. 1906. F.O. 371/78.
[9] Minute by Grey on Bertie to Grey, telegram No. 78, 31 Aug. 1906. Ibid.

tion that while in Berlin Haldane visited the French Ambassador.[1] Finally, he sent a letter full of anxious complaint to Haldane.

> It may alas! have serious consequences; we must wait and see. I want to preserve the entente with France, but it isn't easy, and if it is broken up I must go. The French have of course taken this much too seriously and made a mountain out of it. I *hope* that Bourgeois has overrated the effect it is likely to have on the French Press and public opinion, and if so the incident will pass and be forgotten.[2]

This letter marks a further clarification of Grey's ideas. He now regarded the entente as so fundamental and the need for its permanence as so great that he was prepared to stake his career upon it. He was himself as closely committed to it as it was possible to be. The assurances to Cambon in June and July and the declaration to Haldane in September defined the policy Grey had instinctively pursued at Algeciras, and the entente had completed its transformation from expedient to guiding principle. And it was inevitable that, in spite of his own sincere professions, he should regard any display of friendship to Germany with the utmost nervousness.

The visit itself had, however, been a success. The talks Haldane had in Berlin were, like those at Cronberg, inconclusive but friendly and contributed to the rather vague feeling that there was a *détente* between the two countries. The Kaiser repeated that he accepted the government's desire to maintain the entente and that it was no obstacle to good relations with Germany also. Haldane, on his side, used remarkably cordial language. 'We in England', he declared, 'were proud of H.M. [the Kaiser] as being an Englishman as well as a German'; and he even told the Kaiser that 'many of my countrymen had lived all their days in an island and were more apt to misunderstand Germany than those who had lived much there'.[3] Haldane established good personal relations with the Kaiser, and on his return told him that 'an attachment to Germany which has ever been deep with me has been strengthened'[4]; and in conversation with Tschirschky, he promised to examine with Grey the ways in which Britain could use her influence at Paris to improve

[1] B.D. III.434.
[2] Haldane to Grey, 3 Sept. 1906. Haldane MSS, MS 5907.
[3] B.D. III.435.
[4] Haldane to the Kaiser, 28 Nov. 1906. Haldane MSS, MS 5907.

Franco-German relations.[1] The total result was, as Lascelles told Grey, a 'complete success'.[2] In consequence, wrote Granville, Lascelles' assistant at Berlin, 'the anti-German crew in the Foreign Office are evidently wild with rage against Haldane'.[3] The King, however, sent, through one of his secretaries, an extremely laudatory letter to Haldane. 'He cannot', wrote the secretary, 'sufficiently thank you for it'; and he was 'exceedingly pleased at the success of your visit which he attributes entirely to you personally'.[4]

This was not the attitude which the anxious Grey could take. The more signs there were of an Anglo-German *rapprochement* the more the French grew worried, and the further Grey was driven towards them. In October the French government fell, and on the 21st a new ministry was formed by Clemenceau, with Pichon at the Foreign Office. Almost at once, Cambon told Grey of his fears that in England 'there was a party which was inclined to orient its policy rather towards Germany'. Grey repeated the assurances he had given in July—and this time he stated more explicitly that he wished at all times to be on better terms with France than with Germany.

> There were people who thought it possible to be on equally good terms with Germany and with France, but they were quiet just now, because there was no occasion for a quarrel with Germany. If a subject like the Algeciras Conference was to arise again, France might depend upon it that our support would be just as strong and our attitude as firm as it had been before.

He made an oblique reference to the visits by Edward VII and Haldane: 'We were sometimes embarrassed by rather too many invitations to pay visits, which it would be discourteous to refuse, but there was nothing political in them.'[5]

There were no more developments before the end of the year, and the Cronberg and Haldane visits had little effect upon Grey's diplomacy. The fact was that it was not easy for those who differed from Grey to introduce a permanent change in his policy.

[1] G.P. XXI–II.7199.
[2] Lascelles to Grey, 14 Sept. 1906. Grey MSS, vol. xxii.
[3] Granville to Lascelles, 5 Oct. 1906. Lascelles MSS, vol. iii, Part 5.
[4] Sommer, *Haldane of Cloan*, p. 184.
[5] B.D. III.442.

He was much more sovereign in foreign affairs than Lansdowne had been; and others could only influence him indirectly, on matters which were not the exclusive concern of his department: the King's annual visit to the Continent or Haldane's duty as War Secretary to examine German military organisation. That was why the conflicts of the summer of 1906 had revolved not around diplomacy, as they had in Lansdowne's time, but around a few ceremonial occasions. When the visits were over, and the King or Haldane were back in England, it was much more difficult to maintain continuous supervision of Grey's policy.

3

In such matters, of course, it was the balance of forces inside the Cabinet which was decisive. And the most striking thing about the Liberal ministers was their lack of concern with foreign policy. 'Foreign policy', Grey told Ripon, 'has been discussed so little at the Cabinet.'[1] Partly this was the responsibility of Grey, who had kept the controversial decisions of January 1906 from his colleagues and kept them badly informed after that[2]; but partly, too,

[1] Grey to Ripon, 27 July 1906. Ripon MSS, Add. MSS 43640.

[2] A Foreign Office memorandum of 27 July 1906 laid it down that the Confidential Print was to be divided into two classes: papers of special interest, and those of general interest. The former were to go only to the departments immediately concerned, the latter to 'the King, the Prince of Wales and such Cabinet ministers as the Secretary of State may designate, and should be circulated in the Office to the Under-Secretaries and to all Heads of Departments belonging to the Diplomatic establishment of the Foreign Office. It should also be sent to all Embassies and Legations abroad who receive Foreign Office bags by a safe channel, together with the telegram sections' (F.O. 371/167). Usually, but not always, Grey instructed that important despatches should go to Campbell-Bannerman and Ripon, almost never to anybody else. To take some examples:

Bertie's despatch No. 104 of 11 March 1906 (B.D. III.340), in which he reported that the French would reject the Austrian compromise, was marked by Crowe to go to the King, the Prime Minister, and Ripon.

Grey's telegram No. 40 and despatch No. 161 to Bertie of 14 March 1906 (B.D. III.350; see p. 278), in which he assured the French that if they refused to compromise Britain would still support them, were marked to go to the King, the Prime Minister, and Ripon.

Grey's despatch No. 196 to Lascelles of 31 July 1906 (B.D. III.422; see p. 302), in which he described his statement to Metternich that Anglo-German relations were now normal, was marked for the King, the Prime Minister, Ripon, and Haldane.

Grey's despatch No. 364 to Bertie of 9 July 1906 (B.D. III.420; see p. 301), in which he reported his promise to Cambon that 'if we were called on to take sides, we must take sides with France as at Algeciras', was marked by Barrington to go to the King, the Prime Minister, and Ripon.

Bertie's telegram No. 76 of 30 Aug. 1906, describing French indignation at Haldane's visit (see p. 304), was marked 'not for Print', only for the King.

Grey's telegram No. 176 to Bertie of 30 Aug. 1906 (B.D. III.428; see p. 304),

it was a result of their own lack of interest in foreign policy. The private correspondence of the leading Conservative ministers contains abundant references to foreign policy, that of the Liberals very few. The great issues of foreign policy were no longer settled in the Cabinet, but discussed informally by a few ministers: Lansdowne was overruled at least four times by the Cabinet,[1] Grey, during his first two years of office, not at all. The change is most complete in the case of the Prime Minister. Both Lansdowne's Prime Ministers, Salisbury and Balfour, were deeply interested in foreign affairs, and both intervened to change Lansdowne's policy. Campbell-Bannerman, on the other hand, although he had had his doubts at the critical moment in January 1906, does not seem to have been closely concerned with foreign affairs; he was kept informed of the major developments, but never, so far as can be ascertained, attempted to modify Grey's policy. The only other Minister who received all the important despatches was Ripon; but he too, in spite of his disagreement and anxieties in January 1906, never intervened, and his private correspondence is remarkable for its absence of reference to foreign affairs. It was fortunate for Grey that the Minister who gave him most trouble was Haldane, a fellow Liberal Imperialist, who was and remained his closest friend inside the Cabinet, and who was one of his strongest

saying that the Haldane visit had no connection with Sedan, marked 'not for Print', only for the King.

Grey's despatch No. 620 to Bertie of 8 Nov. 1906 (B.D. III.442; see p. 306), saying that France could always rely upon British support as at Algeciras, was printed but not marked by Grey to go to any Cabinet Ministers, only to the King.

Bertie's despatch No. 196 of 17 April 1907 (B.D. VI.13; see p. 325), reporting Clemenceau's alarm at his conversation with Campbell-Bannerman, and referring to the military conversations was 'not for Print'. The reference to the military conversations drew an inquiry from Fitzmaurice, which suggests that he had not yet heard of them.

Grey's despatch No. 237 to Bertie of 19 April 1907 (B.D. VI.14; see p. 325), in which he reassured Cambon on the use of British troops in war, was 'not for Print' and marked only for the Prime Minister.

The conclusion seems to be that only Campbell-Bannerman and Ripon received the important despatches, and even they did not receive them invariably.

On the distribution of the Russian papers, see pp. 284, 292. The only members of the Cabinet to receive these regularly were Campbell-Bannerman, Ripon, and Morley.

The only Cabinet memoranda circulated by Grey which survive are on the Akaba crisis (F.O. memoranda) and one on the Spanish agreement (B.D. VII.34). He ordered that the Crowe memorandum should go to Campbell-Bannerman, Ripon, Asquith, Morley, and Haldane (see pp. 313–15).

[1] Over his proposed Anglo-German declaration in March 1901; over the Japanese negotiations, which the Cabinet nearly wrecked, in January 1902; over the Baghdad Railway in April 1903; and over the attitude to be taken to the Russo-Japanese conflict in December 1903.

supporters in the great crisis in 1914.[1] For Haldane, Campbell-Bannerman and his Radical friends, who might have agreed with him over foreign policy, felt only dislike and distrust.[2] Asquith, the most powerful figure in the Cabinet after Campbell-Bannerman, was also a friend of Grey's and gave him active support in the Russian negotiations. Only two other Ministers, Morley and Tweedmouth, were brought by their departments into close contact with foreign affairs, and of these, Morley provided essential support in Russian affairs, while Tweedmouth, who by implication was profoundly critical, was isolated inside the Cabinet. Elgin, the Colonial Secretary, did not 'open his mouth on any subject' in the Cabinet.[3] Of the Radicals, Loreburn made a possibly indiscreet speech but did nothing more: he saw the German Ambassador in July 1906, with Grey's approval, but made no recommendation of his own, and when the Ambassador requested another interview in July 1907, he promised that he would do exactly as Grey wished.[4] From the other Radicals—Bryce, Sinclair, Burns, Buxton, Lloyd George, Harcourt[5]—there was no intervention at all in foreign policy.

The reason for this lack of interest was of course that most Ministers were absorbed in the Liberals' extensive programme of social reforms; and Grey's great strength inside the Cabinet was that his diplomacy helped the achievement of domestic policies upon which his colleagues were set. This, already apparent when

[1] Morley of Blackburn, *Memorandum on Resignation*.

[2] There was a dispute over the Army in January 1907 which shows how these attitudes had survived the formation of a united Cabinet. Sinclair, the Radical Scottish Secretary (and Campbell-Bannerman's former Private Secretary), thought Haldane's scheme would be a 'fatal and irretrievable step', and feared that in such matters the C.I.D. would be 'a dangerous weapon, which is in the hands of the services to bully the Cabinet' (Sinclair to Campbell-Bannerman, 8 Jan. and 27 Jan. 1907. Campbell-Bannerman MSS, Add. MSS 41230). Morley agreed with a letter from Campbell-Bannerman about 'the perils that may be involved in a sub-committee where Haldane will carry Grey and Asquith in his capacious pocket', and confessed that 'my suspicions are nearly as black as Sinclair's. This sleek Tyrtaeus of ours loves dodges for their own sake' (Morley to Campbell-Bannerman, 13 Jan. and 15 Jan. 1907. Ibid., Add. MSS 41223). Campbell-Bannerman had apparently hoped to destroy Haldane's scheme, but, as he told Sinclair, when Haldane demonstrated the extent of his support, 'every bolthole was thus stopped. I could only congratulate him, and hope it would turn out a success. He can be cross-examined in the Cabinet. . . . He thus rides on the storm and directs the whirlwind' (Campbell-Bannerman to Sinclair, 3 Feb. 1907. Ibid., Add. MSS 41230).

[3] Morley to Minto, 17 April 1907. Morley MSS, vol. ii.

[4] Loreburn to Grey, 28 July 1906 and 12 July 1907. Grey MSS, vol. lx. G.P. XXI–II.7191.

[5] Harcourt, First Commissioner of Works, joined the Cabinet in February 1907.

Morley supported the Russian entente mainly because it meant the end of excessive commitments and expense, became still more obvious in the Cabinet division over naval policy during 1906.

One of the last acts of the Conservative government had been to authorise, in a paper published on 4 December, a heavy programme of shipbuilding. Known as the 'Cawdor memorandum', this provided that four dreadnoughts or armoured battle-cruisers were to be laid down each year. This was, in the immediate circumstances, a huge programme of construction: the disappearance of the Russian fleet and the development of the dreadnought had already given Britain an overwhelming preponderance at sea. It was true that, from a long-term point of view, the Cawdor programme was rendered necessary by the supersession of the older ships, upon which the British lead was based; but the immediate result, before other Powers had started to build dreadnoughts, was to make such heavy naval expenditure a natural target for Liberal criticism. In February 1906 the Board of Admiralty attempted to justify this heavy programme, using arguments which had the most far-reaching implications for foreign policy. It began, harmlessly enough, by demolishing the argument that the destruction of the Russian fleet allowed Britain to relax her efforts. 'It would seem that Britain, as the friend of France, must also be the *friend* of Russia rather than her enemy! If so, the disasters to Russia's Navy, so far from being capable of use as an argument for British naval *reductions* point diametrically to the contrary.' It then went on, however, to attack the view that Britain could rely upon her new-found friends. The Japanese might well come into conflict with the United States for control of the Pacific; if they did, and if the British had to choose between the two, 'the British people would certainly throw the Alliance overboard'. Still more important was the denial that the entente with France could be regarded as permanent.

> The Board of Admiralty, as the responsible naval advisers of the Government, cannot base their plans upon the shifting sands of any temporary and unofficial international relationships. . . . 'Ententes' may vanish—battleships remain the surest pledges this country can give for the continued peace of the world.[1]

[1] Memo by Board of Admiralty, 15 Feb. 1906. P.R.O., Adm. 116/866 B.

Fisher's attitude is ambiguous: he was the dominating member of this Board, and yet he accepted the cuts eventually made by the government. He told Tweedmouth that the margin of superiority over Germany, 'our only possible foe for years', was so great that it would be 'absurd in the extreme to talk of anything endangering our naval supremacy, *even if we stopped all shipbuilding altogether*!!!'[1] What is certain, however, is that Tweedmouth, the political head of the Admiralty, accepted the arguments of the memorandum and urged them in the Cabinet. The decisive trial of strength came in July, but the best surviving account of his views comes in a letter which he wrote to Campbell-Bannerman in November.

> Good diplomacy must be trusted to secure that all the greatest naval Powers should not at once be ranged against us, for we could not of course be prepared to meet such a combination.
>
> But alliances and good understandings however close and excellent for the time have never been found everlasting and ample preparation must be made to meet emergencies as they arise, for neither ships nor officers and men to man them can be improvised, but take long periods to produce.
>
> Our firm reliance must be placed in a continuity of Foreign and Naval policy. All governments for the last 21 years have accepted and acted up to the Two-Power Standard and it is not to be lightly abandoned now.[2]

Tweedmouth's argument implied a return to something like the heavy expenses of the days of isolation. In particular, his insistence upon the Two Power Standard, which now operated against France and Germany, denied the permanent value of the entente with France; for the Admiralty, the entente was still a temporary expedient, and not, as for Grey, a permanent principle of policy. Clarke, who conducted a campaign against excessive naval expenditure, told the Prime Minister, quite rightly, that 'our present standard can be justified only on the assumption that a war against allied France and Germany is reasonably probable'.[3]

But the retreat from isolation had been caused by the excessive strain upon British resources which it involved, and Selborne had

[1] Marder, *Fear God and Dread Nought*, vol. ii, pp. 90–3.

[2] Tweedmouth to Campbell-Bannerman, 21 Nov. 1906. Campbell-Bannerman MSS, Add. MSS 41231.

[3] Clarke to Campbell-Bannerman, 29 June 1906. Campbell-Bannerman MSS, Add. MSS 41213.

found, as early as 1901, that it was necessary to take the political dispositions of other countries into account when drawing up naval plans. There was no chance of Tweedmouth's arguments being accepted by the new Cabinet, with its desire for economy in defence and expensive social reforms. The lead was taken by Asquith, who was intent upon introducing a scheme of Old Age Pensions.[1] He was supported by Campbell-Bannerman,[2] Loreburn,[3] and probably the great majority of the Cabinet. At the meeting of 10 July Asquith's demand for a reduction of the Cawdor programme was accepted, and Tweedmouth's arguments were rejected. Asquith, after the Cabinet, explained his motives to Tweedmouth.

(1) France + Germany is a myth—not a realisable possibility.

(2) The French programme (guard the future) exists and will in the main continue to exist, on paper and nowhere else.

(3) Even in Germany the Kaiser encounters great and even increasing difficulties in getting his way with the Reichstag.

(4) Discarding all these assumptions, we shall be for the next three years, with this year's Dreadnought *plus* two more in 1907–8 absolutely unassailable even by a Franco-German combination.[4]

Just when a break seemed inevitable, it was averted by Haldane. Asquith had demanded a reduction of the number of new armoured ships to be laid down yearly from four to two; Tweedmouth would concede no more than a reduction to three.[5] Haldane suggested the third ship should be built only if The Hague Conference, due to meet in 1907, failed to agree.[6] This compromise was eventually accepted.

This was the first departure from the Two Power Standard, and the beginning of the period in which Britain determined her construction programme according to Germany alone. The in-

[1] J. A. Spender and Cyril Asquith, *H. H. Asquith*, vol. i, p. 188.

[2] This is implied by the opening lines of Tweedmouth's letter to Campbell-Bannerman of 21 November: 'I am very sorry to find myself at variance with you with regard to the method in which the Two Power Standard is to be regarded . . .' (Campbell-Bannerman MSS, Add. MSS 41231), and by Campbell-Bannerman's letter of support to Asquith in January 1907, on a similar occasion: 'I entirely share your dislike and suspicion of the Navy prospects' (4 Jan. 1907. Asquith MSS).

[3] Loreburn to Campbell-Bannerman, 27 June 1906. Campbell-Bannerman MSS, Add. MSS 41222.

[4] Asquith to Tweedmouth, 10 July 1906. Tweedmouth MSS, Case A.

[5] Asquith's demand is implied in the last paragraph of his letter to Tweedmouth. Tweedmouth's stand was reported by Campbell-Bannerman to the King. See Lee, *King Edward VII*, vol. ii, p. 330.

[6] Haldane to Campbell-Bannerman, 10 July 1906. Campbell-Bannerman MSS, Add. MSS 41218.

creasingly anti-German character of the new Navy was further emphasised by Fisher's redistribution of October 1906, which reduced the strength of the Fleet outside Europe to concentrate it at home, ready to meet a German attack.[1] But the most significant outcome of the dispute was that British policy came to rest still more upon the maintenance of the entente. Asquith had told Tweedmouth that 'France + Germany is a myth—not a realisable possibility'; and the whole Liberal domestic programme came to depend upon this fact. Old Age Pensions were financed by the *entente cordiale*. The King instinctively supported Tweedmouth—'evidently the cheese-paring policy of the Government is also to be extended to the navy'[2]—as he instinctively opposed Grey's Persian and German policies; but his opposition was of no avail. The Liberals were deeply committed to France.

4

The first day of the year 1907 saw the circulation of the famous Crowe memorandum. It was a landmark in the development of British policy, for it expressed in a coherent and comprehensive form the ideas, which, instinctively held, had, to an increasing extent, governed the actions of the professional diplomats in the preceding years. Here for the first time the practical policies of the Foreign Office, substantially accepted by Grey as Foreign Secretary, were codified and synthesised into a system of remarkable power and intelligence.

Crowe began his survey with a review of the history of the French entente. In its origin it was simply a settlement of long-standing differences; but the Germans, who wished to maintain their 'predominant position' on the Continent by fostering a state of antagonism between the other Powers, saw in it 'a stumbling-block in the way of German supremacy'. They therefore determined to break it up by means of a crisis in Morocco. After a preliminary success, however, they merely succeeded in driving England and France together and converting the entente into a means of 'common resistance to outside dictation and aggression'. Without the German attack upon it, insisted Crowe, the entente would not have developed this anti-German element.

[1] Marder, *Fear God and Dread Nought*, vol. ii, pp. 33ff, 93–108. Lee, op. cit., vol. ii, pp. 331–3.
[2] Lee, op. cit., vol. ii, p. 330.

But the Anglo-German tension apparent at the Moroccan crisis had a deeper significance than this. Crowe now stated the doctrine of the balance of power, which, almost ignored under the Conservatives, had become the characteristic feature of Grey's diplomacy. England, he declared, was driven to adopt this policy to safeguard her preponderance at sea: 'The opposition into which England must inevitably be driven to any country aspiring to . . . a dictatorship assumes almost the form of a law of nature.' Could Germany be cast in this rôle? A survey of Prussian history showed that it was dominated by 'systematic territorial aggrandizement achieved mainly at the point of the sword'; and 'with the events of 1871 the spirit of Prussia passed into the new Germany'. In particular, the German Empire followed the same principles in its desire to become a 'World Power' with extensive imperial interests. She was determined to play 'on the world's political stage a much larger and much more dominant part than she finds allotted to herself under the present distribution of material power'. Inevitably, she came into conflict with England. A long series of incidents during the previous twenty years demonstrated the opposition between the interests of the two countries; but that opposition had been caused by 'entirely one-sided aggressiveness' on the part of Germany, while England had shown 'never-failing readiness to purchase the resumption of friendly relations by concession after concession'. The aggressiveness of German policy might be based upon a conscious striving for 'the establishment of German hegemony, at first in Europe, and eventually in the world'; or, more probably, it might be 'the expression of a vague, confused and unpractical statesmanship, not fully realizing its own drift'. But the practical effects were the same, and it was not necessary for Britain to determine which was the true explanation. She must not attempt to discourage Germany's legitimate claims to colonial expansion or naval power; but, above all, she must learn the lesson of her own experience, that concessions would encourage, and not appease, Germany. The firm resistance to German pressure at Algeciras had already produced a perceptible improvement in relations; and a combination of courtesy and firmness would produce a further improvement.[1]

The only reply to this memorandum came from Sanderson, who

[1] B.D. III, pp. 397–420.

had now been retired for nearly a year. After a survey of recent Anglo-German relations, he concluded that, although the Germans were tenacious and overbearing negotiators, 'there have been many occasions on which we have worked comfortably in accord with Germany, and not a few cases in which her support has been serviceable to us'.[1] Sanderson showed once again his remarkable capacity for seeing the international scene through others' eyes: Germany, as a new Power, was naturally impatient to fulfil its aspirations, and also suffered from the insecurity of its position between the two allied Great Powers of France and Russia.[2] He looked forward to a softening of the loud assertiveness of her demand for colonies, and he described Britain's own attitude as unduly susceptible and jealous. 'It has sometimes seemed to me that to a foreigner reading our press the British Empire must appear in the light of some huge giant sprawling all over the globe, with gouty fingers and toes stretching in every direction, which cannot be approached without eliciting a scream.'[3]

Grey described Crowe's memorandum as 'both interesting and suggestive' and 'most helpful as a guide to policy', and instructed that it should go to Campbell-Bannerman, Ripon, Asquith, Morley, and Haldane.[4] But although it was later seen as the classic formulation of British policy, it attracted little attention at the time: it is not even mentioned in the private correspondence of the Cabinet or Foreign Office.[5] It was however a masterly statement of the views which Grey and majority opinion in the Office were coming more and more to adopt, and contributed something to the precision of these ideas and therefore perhaps to their hold over the men who subscribed to them.

Internal changes in the Office also confirmed the adoption of the new policies. Apart from Bertie at Paris, the only survivor of the Salisbury régime was Lascelles, who had been Ambassador at Berlin since 1895. He was, however, becoming the subject of increasing criticism. In 1908, for example, Trench, the Military

[1] Ibid., pp. 428–9. [2] Ibid., p. 429.

[3] Ibid., p. 430. Fitzmaurice argued that German hostility depended largely upon the personal instability of the Kaiser, and that 'the whole situation would be changed in a moment if this personal factor were changed, and another Minister like General Caprivi also came into office in consequence'. Ibid., p. 420. [4] Ibid., p. 420.

[5] 'Neither Morley nor Loreburn . . . seemed to have paid much attention to it at the time', according to the Introduction by F. W. Hirst to Morley's *Memorandum on Resignation*, p. xvi.

Attaché at Berlin, wrote that the Germans would, if the moment were opportune, attempt a *coup* against England. When Lascelles described this view as 'unduly alarmist', and refused to endorse it, Crowe minuted that 'Sir F. Lascelles does not apparently share this view, but it is probably quite correct nevertheless'.[1] At about the same time he was criticised by Crowe, Hardinge, and Grey for giving the Kaiser the impression that he was less anti-German than the government.[2] The Foreign Office instead cast its favour upon Sir Fairfax Cartwright, the Minister at Munich, who sent home long analyses of South German opinion.[3] 'I am glad he is back and that his reports are coming again', wrote Grey at the beginning of 1908, after a period of absence by Cartwright.[4]

In London the preoccupations of 1906 re-asserted themselves in the following year. Crowe was particularly insistent upon the dangers of a Franco-German *rapprochement*. 'It is significant', he wrote on 1 March, 'that more than one voice is raised in France to advocate an understanding with Germany.'[5] A Franco-German press campaign in favour of French participation in the Baghdad Railway needed 'careful watching' because, if successful, it would promote German expansion and drive a wedge between England and France.[6] Spicer thought that there existed in France 'a small but mischievous party' who were endeavouring to undermine the entente and replace it by a Franco-German understanding. For twenty years Germany had 'followed a line consistently unfriendly to the interests of Great Britain'; and the ultimate object of the growing German fleet 'can only be to try conclusions with that of Great Britain'. F. A. Campbell agreed with Spicer's analysis, and Grey, who never protested against the many minutes of the anti-German party, praised it as 'very valuable'.[7] Meanwhile, the power of this group was consolidated inside the Office. Hardinge

[1] B.D. VI.94.

[2] B.D. VI.88. Other minutes critical of Lascelles are to be found at B.D. VI.78, 81, and by Hardinge on 19 June 1907, referring to indiscreet statements at a reception in Germany for the Lord Mayor. 'The incident shows how little reliance is to be placed on Sir F. Lascelles' opinion in making such a statement as "there was not the slightest danger of French susceptibilities being wounded" .' Minute on Lascelles to Grey, telegram No. 16, 19 June 1907. F.O. 371/261.

[3] B.D. VI.2, 8, 16, 21–4.

[4] B.D. VI, p. 108.

[5] Minute by Crowe, 1 March, on Bertie to Grey, despatch No. 109, 27 Feb. 1907. F.O. 371/253.

[6] Minute by Crowe on Bertie to Grey, despatch No. 165, 29 March 1907. Ibid.

[7] B.D. VI.35.

had intended to appoint Mallet to an Assistant Under-Secretaryship when Barrington retired in the summer of 1907: in fact, Cromer's retirement from Egypt in the spring and Gorst's appointment to succeed him created an earlier vacancy, to which Hardinge insisted, against some opposition, on appointing Mallet.[1] The next step in his plan to train Mallet as his eventual successor had been accomplished.

Hardinge himself stood somewhat aloof from the extreme anti-German party, although he accepted the basic premises of Grey's policy. His own ideas were not, however, consistent or coherent: he played a leading part in inducing Grey to consent to a state visit by the Kaiser[2]; but in July, giving up the beliefs he had himself held the previous year, he minuted that 'there is no doubt that great efforts are being made by Germany to break up the Franco-Russian Alliance and the Anglo-French "entente" '.[3] His comparative moderation may be due to the fact that, unlike Crowe or Mallet, he attributed Anglo-German rivalry to one definite feature of German policy: the expansion of her fleet. 'If Germany would place some limit on her naval construction schemes', he minuted, 'suspicion of Germany's intention would soon evaporate on this side of the Channel.'[4] He declared on another occasion: 'It is, I believe, due more to the Navy League than to any other faction that the relations between England and Germany are not as friendly as they should be.'[5] Hardinge never rejected the balance of power arguments that became so popular after 1906; but his emphasis on naval rivalry made Britain less dependent on France. He had shown that he was more anxious than Grey to retain England's freedom of manoeuvre when he had demanded pressure on the French in March 1906 and when he advocated a visit by the Kaiser. Unlike Grey, he definitely rejected the idea of a French alliance on the ground that 'the present elastic situation is more satisfactory for us although the fact that we are not bound hand and foot to the French makes the latter nervous and suspicious'.[6]

[1] Mallet to Bertie, 25 April 1907; Hardinge to Bertie, 27 May 1907. Bertie MSS, Series B.
[2] See pp. 326–7.
[3] Minute by Hardinge, 29 July 1907, F.O. 371/261.
[4] Minute on Lascelles to Grey, despatch No. 51, 6 Feb. 1907. F.O. 371/258.
[5] Minute on Lascelles to Grey, 28 May 1907, despatch No. 243. F.O. 371/259.
[6] B.D. III.439.

5

The first half of 1907 also saw a diplomatic achievement by Grey which put the seal upon the French entente. Britain had always been extremely vulnerable in the Western Mediterranean, where the port of Gibraltar, upon which her whole position depended, could be threatened or even rendered useless by Spanish hostility. This local vulnerability had been increased by the 1904 agreement, which had envisaged the ultimate control of the Moroccan coast on each side of Gibraltar by Spain, but without any safeguards for Britain. Lansdowne had in June 1905 proposed to the Spanish an agreement by which Britain would guarantee their possession of the Moorish seaboard and other strategic points in their control in return for an undertaking by Spain not to alienate any of them and some arrangement giving security to Gibraltar. Since then, however, the subject had been allowed to drop.

It was revived by Hardinge on 8 December 1906. He suggested that the Spanish Ambassador should be reminded of Lansdowne's proposal.[1] Grey's first reaction was unenthusiastic—'I do not desire to multiply treaty obligations'—but he declared that his decision would depend upon the importance and effectiveness of the security given to Gibraltar,[2] and obtained the Prime Minister's consent to consultation of the government's service advisers. Haldane doubted if a Spanish promise would increase the security of Gibraltar from the land side,[3] but, for the Admiralty, Ottley, Fisher, and Tweedmouth all agreed upon the great advantage that such an Anglo-Spanish agreement would have.[4] From Paris, Bertie—who had put the same point to Lansdowne—suggested that the French fear of German encroachment in the Canaries or Balearics might induce them to accept greater security for Gibraltar.[5] Grey therefore raised the subject in the Committee of Imperial Defence on 20 December. He suggested an agreement covering the Moroccan seaboard, the Balearics, the Canaries, and Fernando Po, and asserted that France would be unlikely to object 'as her interests and ours were identical in that we both preferred that the

[1] B.D. VII.3. [2] B.D. VII.4.
[3] B.D. VII.5.
[4] Memo by Ottley (with concurrence of Fisher and Tweedmouth), 14 Dec.; Tweedmouth to Grey, 15 Dec. 1906. Grey MSS, vol. xlviii.
[5] B.D. VII.7.

islands should remain under Spain rather than that they should pass into the possession of Germany'.[1]

The original motive for the proposed agreement had been distrust of France rather than of Germany. Grey never lost sight of the immediate objective—greater security for Gibraltar—but he changed the emphasis of the proposal so that it became part of his larger plans to hold Germany in check. This emerges plainly in his explanatory letter to the Prime Minister.

> She [Germany] will continue her endeavours to get an ascendancy over Spain. The Spanish do not like her methods and resent her pressure; they are proud; but they are also weak, and they are afraid that some day France, if left to herself, may squeeze Spain. It is, therefore, to us that Spain looks with the greatest confidence in the honesty of our intentions.
>
> It would be a great calamity if Spain, from lack of other support, fell under German influence, and let Germany get a footing in Spanish affairs, and if in this instance Germany gets a landing-place on Spanish territory. I think we should give Spain confidence in her position for the future, by offering her an undertaking to protect her islands and Moroccan coast against aggression, in return for guarantees to us on her part, which would increase the security of Gibraltar.[2]

Campbell-Bannerman laid stress on Spanish hostility to France but agreed that 'it would be advisable to come to some mutual agreement if on investigation we saw it safe and possible'.[3] Meanwhile, in order to facilitate an agreement, Grey was also urging a meeting at sea between Edward VII and the King of Spain. Once again he laid stress on the German danger. 'A good deal turns upon Spain just now; it would be very awkward if she turned to Germany and away from France and ourselves. The Moroccan question would then become more embroiled than ever.'[4]

The difference of view between Foreign Office and Admiralty that had become plain in 1906 re-emerged when the Spanish negotiations were discussed. Grey had laid most emphasis on the general value of an Anglo-Spanish arrangement in resisting Germany; the Admiralty welcomed its local importance as a weapon

[1] Minutes of 94th meeting, 20 Dec. 1906. C.I.D. Records, Cab. 2/2/1.
[2] Grey to Campbell-Bannerman, 11 Jan. 1907. Grey MSS, vol. lxi. Not printed in the *British Documents*.
[3] Campbell-Bannerman to Grey, 14 Jan. 1907. Ibid.
[4] Lee, *King Edward VII*, vol. ii, p. 536.

against France. An extensive Admiralty investigation in February concluded that

> the advantages we derive from such an engagement with Spain . . . would be much greater in the case of a war with France than they would be in the case of war with Germany, as the two main points in the Mediterranean, viz. Gibraltar and the Balearic Islands are unlikely to be of great strategic value in the case of war with the latter Power.[1]

The essential difference was the same as in 1906: the Foreign Office was mainly preoccupied with the German problem, and saw everything in relation to that; the Admiralty was more 'isolationist' and insisted upon the need for defence against all Powers.

The projected agreement therefore had two aspects, and the negotiations did not run smoothly. On 7 January the French Ambassador in Madrid suddenly intervened. He suggested a joint Anglo-French guarantee of the Spanish possessions, a proposal likely to offend the Spanish and which did not mention Gibraltar.[2] Thereafter the French did their best to persuade Grey to accept, not the dual Anglo-Spanish arrangement at first contemplated, but a definite tripartite convention.[3] They even induced the reluctant Spanish to agree, and with them drew up a draft convention which provided for joint consultation if the status quo in the Western Mediterranean was violated.[4] This French intervention caused resentment in London. Even Crowe thought it 'very inconsiderate',[5] and Grey decided to reject the tripartite form. Hardinge observed that such an agreement would require 'absolute secrecy' in case it became known to Germany and drove her into 'hostile action of some kind'.[6] Grey told Bertie that, since such an arrangement could not be kept secret, it would provoke 'awkward questions'; in particular, he would be asked about Gibraltar, which neither France nor Spain would wish to mention specifically.[7] A simple Anglo-Spanish exchange of notes would not raise the embarrassing question of the French attitude to Gibraltar.[8] The French had in fact given themselves away by their insistence on a tripartite agreement: Jules Cambon, their Ambassador in Madrid,

[1] Memo by Board of Admiralty, 25 Feb. 1907. C.I.D. Records, Cab. 4/2, Paper 99B.
[2] B.D. VII.9. [3] B.D. VII.10, 13, 16–18, 28, 30, 32.
[4] B.D. VII.17. [5] B.D. VII.9.
[6] B.D. VII.19. Hardinge represented this view to Cambon (D.D.F. X.412). Cambon thought that Grey was nervous about the reaction to the agreement of his colleagues, but himself favoured an *accord à trois* (ibid., D.D.F. XI.2).
[7] B.D. VII.23. [8] B.D. VII.32.

had admitted that it would be easy to reach an understanding if the British did not demand guarantees for Gibraltar and Malta.[1] French participation would have changed the whole nature of the Anglo-Spanish arrangement; and although Grey valued it mainly for the check it gave Germany, it was impossible for him to give up the local advantages which had at first justified it.

On the other hand, it was impossible to leave the French out altogether. Bertie, whose attitude to the entente was always frankly opportunistic, wished to do so, as he had in 1905,[2] but he was overruled. On 28 February Grey carried the C.I.D. with him in a proposal that the French should become a party to the negotiations.[3] He suggested that the French should exchange notes with Spain similar to the Anglo-Spanish notes, or that Britain should promise to keep France informed of all her dealings with Spain under the new agreement.[4] In the result, both courses were adopted.

But while the form of the agreement was being discussed the Spanish introduced a change of great significance. Lansdowne's original project in 1905, and that revived by Grey and Hardinge in December 1906, had been limited in scope to Gibraltar and certain specified strategic points in the possession of Spain. Then the French intervened with the result that the agreement became much more general. Cambon had specifically urged that the Spanish would only accept an understanding on Gibraltar if the treaty was given 'un caractère aussi général que possible',[5] and the French draft of 14 January extended it to cover all the maritime possessions of the three Powers 'dans le bassin de la Méditerranée et dans la partie de l'Atlantique qui baigne les côtes de l'Europe et de l'Afrique'.[6] Even this, however, was not enough for the Spanish, who feared that such an agreement would be interpreted simply as a humiliating protection for their own territories and also wanted to commit Britain and France more deeply to the status quo.[7] They therefore proposed on 25 March the insertion of a clause providing for joint consultation in the event of aggression directed against the status quo in the Mediterranean or Western Atlantic.[8] The

[1] B.D. VII.16.
[2] Bertie to Hardinge, 19 Jan. 1907. Bertie MSS, Series A.
[3] Minutes of 96th meeting, 28 Feb. 1907. C.I.D. Records, Cab. 2/2/1.
[4] B.D. VII.23. [5] D.D.F. X.412. [6] B.D. VII.13.
[7] B.D. VII.18. [8] B.D. VII.17.

French were of course glad to satisfy the Spanish desire to extend the agreement still further—Cambon had already recommended something of the sort[1]—and the British also acquiesced, apparently without comment, in this radical extension of its scope. On 16 May, therefore, Britain and France exchanged identical notes with Spain declaring their desire to preserve the status quo 'in the Mediterranean and in that part of the Atlantic Ocean which washes the shores of Europe and Africa', and announcing their readiness for joint consultation if that status quo should be threatened. At the same time Britain and France recognised each other's notes and declared that, if such consultations took place, they should be tripartite.[2] The scope of the agreement had therefore been greatly extended: it now concerned, not only Spanish possessions, but also the status quo throughout the Mediterranean and a large part of the Atlantic. The change reflected Grey's own changed conception of the nature of such an understanding. And Britain was involved in a new and great commitment; for Grey assured Cambon on 8 June that, if Germany threatened the new agreement, 'the regions affected by these Notes were very near to Morocco and I should regard the spirit of the Agreement of 1904 as applying to the provisions of these Notes, and the same support would be forthcoming as we had given in connection with the 1904 Agreement'.[3]

6

Negotiations on the Baghdad Railway dragged on inconclusively during the first two years of Grey's period of office. Grey's dilemma was that while the reasons which had made participation in 1903 so desirable were as strong as ever, he was unwilling to move without France and Russia. O'Conor continued to advocate British participation, on the ground that the Germans would build the line with or without it,[4] and he was supported by Fitzmaurice.[5]

[1] D.D.F. X.412. [2] B.D. VII.39–43.

[3] B.D. VII.50. D.D.F. XI.17. According to Cambon: 'Il m'a répondu que les nouveaux accords n'étaient que le complément des conventions de 1904; que les engagements pris pour le Maroc s'appliquaient aux arrangements actuels et que le Gouvernement britannique se considérait comme lié avec nous en même temps qu'avec l'Espagne. "En un mot, ai-je dit, si l'Allemagne nous cherchait querelle, nous pourrions compter sur vous?"—"Oui", a-t-il répliqué.' Bertie was instructed to make the same promise at Paris to leave no room for doubt. D.D.F. XI.44.

[4] B.D. VI.223.

[5] Minute by Fitzmaurice on O'Conor to Grey, 20 Feb. 1906. Grey MSS, vol. xl.

But Grey laid down that he could not afford to be separated from France and Russia; he told Cromer in April 1906:

> The Baghdad Railway question may be re-opened presently, and if so I shall be in business relations with the Germans again; but this all depends upon the attitude of the French and Russians. I am not going into any business with the Germans without France and Russia.[1]

The French had always been willing to join, but the Russians were the Railway's most inveterate enemies. Grey therefore decided upon an attempt to convert them. He assured Benckendorff on 11 May that Britain would not go in without them and the French, but pressed for consideration of the terms upon which they would participate.[2] He asked the French to take the same action.[3] Morley was also anxious to participate with the French and Russians.[4] The British were in fact so eager to humour Russia that Grey gave up their earlier demand for exclusive control of the southern end of the line, from Baghdad to the Gulf[5]; he assured Cambon that he was 'not at all prepared to create friction with Russia by making special conditions in connection with the Bagdad Railway which might alienate Russian cooperation'.[6] Hardinge indeed declared that the Russian attitude was of 'primary importance'.[7]

The Anglo-French attempts at persuasion bore fruit on 3 November, when Isvolsky announced that he was ready to begin discussion about the entry into the Railway of the three entente Powers.[8] Grey in reply proposed that 'the three Governments should arrive at a preliminary understanding as to the lines on which a satisfactory settlement could be made'.[9] A Cabinet committee, consisting of Grey, Asquith, Morley, and Lloyd George, was then formed to draw up a detailed statement of the British terms, and decided on 30 May that, if Britain went in, 'it must be on the footing of our having entire rights of construction and

[1] Grey to Cromer, 15 April 1906. Grey MSS, vol. vii.
[2] Grey to Spring-Rice, despatch No. 213, 11 May 1906. F.O. 371/125.
[3] B.D. VI.222.
[4] Morley to Minto, 11 April 1906. Morley MSS, vol. i. Morley several times referred to his desire to join.
[5] B.D. VI.224.
[6] B.D. VI.230. When the Germans hinted that they would reach an arrangement with Britain alone on this condition, his reaction was that they were trying to split Britain from Russia. D.D.F. X.108.
[7] B.D. VI.227. [8] B.D. VI.235. [9] B.D. VI.241.

management from Baghdad or from Mosul'.[1] This decision was communicated to the French and Russian Ambassadors on 4 June.[2] It represented a reversal of Grey's policy in 1906 when he had declared that he would insist on no such condition, and created considerable difficulties for him.

His main preoccupation was to preserve the unity of the three entente Powers, and success required him to maintain a delicate balance. If he went too quickly, the Russians might be antagonised, but if he went too slowly, the French might defect. This latter consideration was already on his mind in April 1907 when he told Asquith that 'unless I can give an answer soon the French financiers may break away and there will be serious trouble'.[3] Events during the spring and summer of 1907 served to reinforce this fear. Already, at the end of March, there had been a brief campaign in the French and German press advocating an understanding between their two countries in the Near East. Crowe commented that 'this deserves to be watched (it is M. Rouvier's track)'.[4] The Clemenceau government was weak, and Bertie was apprehensive about its successor.[5] Then, at the end of June, Étienne, the leader of the French colonialist party, visited Kiel during Regatta week and met the Kaiser. Bertie guessed that the Baghdad Railway would be discussed[6]; and Lister commented upon the favourable press notices which the cordiality of his reception had evoked in France.[7]

Grey was always alarmed by such signs, and his alarm was increased by the fact that on 31 July Cambon condemned the plan put forward by the Cabinet committee and stated that Russia would 'never agree'.[8] Grey at once said that 'if the French Government thought our proposal was impossible, we should be glad to know their objections and to discuss any other suggestion which they had to make'. Both Morley's informal report of the committee's decision and the official note addressed to France and

[1] Morley to Minto, 31 May 1907. Morley MSS, vol. ii. All the Ministers were departmentally concerned: Lloyd George was then President of the Board of Trade.
[2] B.D. VI.250.
[3] Grey to Asquith, 9 April 1907. Grey MSS, vol. xlii.
[4] Bertie to Grey, despatch No. 146, 23 March, and 165, 29 March 1907, and minutes by Crowe. F.O. 371/253.
[5] Bertie to Grey, 18 April 1907. Grey MSS, vol. xi.
[6] Bertie to Grey, 19 June 1907, despatch No. 311. F.O. 371/255.
[7] Lister to Grey, despatch No. 330, 1 July 1907. Ibid.
[8] B.D. VI.252.

Russia had spoken of the condition put forward as a *sine qua non* of British participation; but now Grey did not dissent from Cambon's conclusion that it represented 'a desire, and not a condition'.[1] There the matter rested until after the signature of the Russian entente.

7

General relations with Germany in 1907 followed the same pattern as in the previous year, with Grey being urged to greater friendship but resisting the pressure through fear of the reaction of France. His apprehension about France was increased in April by one of Campbell-Bannerman's rare incursions into foreign affairs. While on a visit to Paris on 9 April, the Prime Minister told Clemenceau, by the latter's account, that 'he did not think that English public opinion would allow of British troops being employed on the Continent of Europe'. Clemenceau expressed dismay, asked if Campbell-Bannerman was aware of the military conversations in January 1906, and warned him that the effect of the conversation upon his colleagues would be 'disastrous'.[2] Grey, after consulting the Prime Minister, at once sent a letter of reassurance. Campbell-Bannerman had 'dwelt upon the reluctance of the British people to undertake obligations which would commit them to a Continental war, but . . . he made no statement to the effect that under no circumstances should we allow British troops to be employed on the Continent of Europe'. He assured the French that Campbell-Bannerman had known of the military conversations, and gave a general promise that 'public opinion here would be very reluctant to go to war, but it would not place limits upon the use of our forces, if we were engaged in war, and all our forces naval and military would then be used in the way in which they would be most effective'.[3]

Grey had therefore tried to repair the damage and to show that the Prime Minister's statements were consistent with his own. But it could hardly be denied that there was a considerable difference of emphasis: Grey had dwelt upon the willingness, Campbell-Bannerman upon the reluctance, of Britain to risk war. Bertie suspected that 'Clemenceau put the case too straight and that Campbell-Bannerman in order to avoid giving a distinct answer or make any definite statement shied at it and ran into the ditch on

[1] B.D. VI.252. [2] B.D. VI.9. [3] B.D. VI.10.

the opposite side of the road by laying too much stress on the unwillingness of the British public to land men on the Continent'. The British must avoid the dangers of each extreme. 'The danger for us to avoid will be to make the French lose confidence in our support and so drive them into some arrangement with Germany harmful to us while not being so harmful to the French. At the same time we must not encourage the French to rely on our material land support to the extent of making them beard the Germans.'[1] Mallet's verdict was that it was 'very stupid of him [Clemenceau] to raise this question again now à propos of nothing and with Campbell-Bannerman of all people. H.M.G. will never give a categorical assurance of assistance but they went very far last year and if Germany made an unprovoked attack on France I feel confident we should intervene.'[2] Altogether, the episode shows the survival of Campbell-Bannerman's doubts about Grey's policy, but doubts which were never precisely formulated or at least never effectively urged. Mallet's reference to 'Campbell-Bannerman of all people' demonstrates the apprehension with which the Foreign Office regarded his opinions and activities.

The Foreign Office probably regarded the King in the same way; and on his side Edward, although he never put forward any coherent alternative, was instinctively doubtful about the wisdom of their policy. According to Fitzmaurice, German suspicions of his activities were groundless. 'The Germans are wild about the King's so-called intrigues but I was on the contrary told the other day on a fairly good authority that the King was now frightened; and said Grey was too anti-German for his tastes, etc.'[3] Certainly the disputes between the majority of the Foreign Office on the one side and the King and Haldane on the other now began again. In April the King again pressed strongly for an invitation to the Kaiser to visit England: he pointed out that he owed the Kaiser an invitation and that, if one was sent, 'it would tend to improve the relations between the two countries, without giving our friends any real cause for suspicion or alarm'. He was supported by Hardinge, who argued that 'this visit has to be paid some time or other, and that there is the possibility that with the visit in view

[1] Bertie to Mallet, 15 April 1907, Bertie MSS, Series A.
[2] Mallet to Bertie, 13 April 1907. Ibid.
[3] Fitzmaurice to Lascelles, 8 May 1907. Lascelles MSS, vol. iii, Part 5.

German policy abroad might assume a less aggressive attitude than at present while the invitation to the Emperor might help to mitigate any ill-feeling that he will probably have towards us when we have negotiated our agreement with Russia'.[1] Grey later pretended that he regarded such a meeting as 'salutary' in view of the good relations being maintained with France,[2] but at the time he only accepted Hardinge's advice with reluctance: 'As a visit of the German Emperor must take place it would be a relief to have it over soon.' Even so, he wanted to delay a definite decision and confessed that he wished an invitation could be made conditional upon there being no renewed crisis in Morocco.[3] Events were to show that he regarded the approaching visit with misgiving. The summer saw rumours of a Franco-German *rapprochement* in the Near East, and after the King met the Kaiser on his annual Continental holiday in August Cartwright reported that the German press was trying to impress France with her isolation in order to drive her into the arms of Germany. Grey minuted that 'the constant attempt to do this is the one and only barrier which prevents Germany from being on satisfactory and good terms with both of us'.[4] At about the same time there was a rising in Casablanca and fighting took place between French and Moroccans.[5] Grey decided to limit the effects of the Kaiser's visit: he told the King that he should bring only one Minister, and not two, as was anticipated,[6] and he instructed Lascelles to dissuade the Germans from sending Bülow.[7] He told Lascelles that the enemies of the entente in France could point to her Moroccan troubles as justification for their point of view, and that 'if those who hold these views in France and those who make use of them in Germany (it was the Emperor who said France had got a hornet's nest out of the Entente) can fix on anything just at this moment which has the appearance of a cooling off towards France on our part and a definite rapprochement with Germany, their case will be strengthened. . . . It is manifestly in the interests of Germany to make this view prevail, since by so doing she would alienate France from us and draw her closer to herself. . . . And so we shall run the risk of returning to

[1] B.D. VI.44. [2] B.D. VI.45.
[3] Grey to Hardinge, 15 April 1907. Grey MSS, vol. liii.
[4] Cartwright to Grey, despatch No. 79, and minute by Grey, 21 Aug. 1907. F.O. 371/253.
[5] B.D. VII, p. 52. [6] B.D. VI.47. [7] B.D. VI.48.

our position of isolation in Europe, and of losing much of the strong position which our recent policy has won for us.'[1] Always, when any gestures of friendship were made towards Germany Grey found reason for nervousness about the French reaction. The King was, however, once again supported by Haldane. Tyrrell, who had succeeded as Private Secretary to Grey on Mallet's promotion, wrote to Bertie on 5 Spetember:

Haldane and Co. who obviously have been persuaded that something should be done to mark the Emperor's visit as being different in some way or other from the visits paid by other Heads of States with a view to create a suspicious atmosphere in Paris and on which the Germans intend to work in cooperation with such men as Étienne and Co., who wish to throw the blame for the Moroccan imbroglio on us.[2]

The King was able to resist Grey's proposal that the Kaiser should only be able to bring one Minister with him[3]; but Grey had his way over the exclusion of Bülow.[4]

But the most striking proof of Grey's anxiety was still to come. The Army Council had authorised a visit to Germany by the band of the Coldstream Guards after refusing permission for a similar visit to France, and Grey wrote, on 4 October, an angry letter of protest to Haldane.

It is really important that the Coldstream Band should not go to Germany. The Germans must be content with the Emperor's visit; there has been so much embracing already this year and there is so much still to come that our foreign policy will not stand any more. . . .

I am not at all comfortable about the effect of what has been arranged already and I can't be responsible for the consequences if any more Anglo-German visits are piled on this year.

A great deal has been done and still remains to be done and the consequences of our doing it will be serious.[5]

The hint of resignation was repeated in a letter to Knollys on the 6th.

It really is most embarrassing that the Foreign Office should be put in

[1] Ibid.
[2] Tyrrell to Bertie, 5 Sept. 1907. Bertie MSS, Series A.
[3] Lee, *King Edward VII*, vol. ii, p. 553.
[4] Ibid. B.D. VI.49, 51, 58.
[5] Grey to Haldane, 4 Oct. 1907. Haldane MSS, MS 5907.

this position and I shall ask that for the future communications between foreign Embassies and the War Office should go through the Foreign Office. I cannot otherwise be responsible for policy.[1]

These letters produced an outburst from the King. Knollys told Hardinge that 'he much regrets the action taken by the Foreign Office in regard to the Coldstream Band question'. Edward believed that 'should our friendship with France rest upon so trumpery a point the entente must rest upon a foundation so slender as to render it of but little practical value'. Knollys continued:

> It appears to H.M. that even if the Foreign Office are right in their contention, which he does not admit, it would be a very great mistake to offend the Germans on such a small matter, especially on the eve of the Emperor's visit, and he does not hesitate to say that if the Emperor is affronted by the action of the Foreign Office, he (the King) will feel very much annoyed, and he considers that they would, under the circumstances of the Emperor's approaching visit, be placing him in a very unfair position.[2]

Haldane supported the King,[3] but before Grey's insistence both had to give way.[4] Nothing can better illustrate Grey's extreme nervousness about French reaction to any sign of Anglo-German friendship than the fact that over such a trivial episode as the visit of a band to Germany he was willing to force a quarrel inside the government and threaten resignation.

8

For the first two years of his Foreign Secretaryship, Grey's policy had been dominated by fear and suspicion of Germany. They had been the principal motives for the Russian entente and the Mediterranean agreements with France and Spain. Believing that Germany was a threat to the European balance of power, he had made it his first object to preserve a close understanding with France and had greatly extended the promises made to her by Lansdowne. On the other hand, he always claimed, both at the time and in his auto-

[1] Grey to Knollys, 6 Oct. 1907. Copy in Haldane MSS, MS 5907.
[2] Lee, *King Edward VII*, vol. ii, pp. 551–2.
[3] On 8 October Knollys told Grey of the King's opinion that the Kaiser would think it 'extraordinary' that 'the Sovereign of this country, supported by the Secretary of State for War, cannot even send a military band abroad without the approval of the Foreign Office'. Copy in Haldane MSS, MS 5907.
[4] Lee, op. cit., vol. ii, p. 553.

biography, that he had not thereby lost his freedom of action. Britain was not committed to France and could restrain her if necessary; she could always use her influence for peace and there was, therefore, nothing to prevent good Anglo-German relations if only Germany would be reasonable. But however sincere these professions were, he was always in practice so apprehensive about the effect on France of any show of independence, of any gesture of friendship to Germany, that he found it impossible, during these two years, to play that mediating rôle. Britain was in fact tied to France—even when she was unreasonable, as Grey himself admitted that she was at Algeciras.

Grey did not choose this policy deliberately. He began by meditating concessions to Germany and even, in March 1906, attempted to put pressure on France to be more conciliatory; and he was only driven away from this policy as events made its implications clear. Perhaps no other course was possible once Grey had made the assumptions that he did. His real failure was that the picture he had of his policy in his own mind did not change as the reality changed; and he could never therefore understand the view the Germans took of it. This rigidity resulted from the moral cast of his mind: he wanted to believe that the policy he followed was fair to Germany as well as necessary to Britain. To bridge the gap between what was expedient and what was right, he employed that power of self-deception which had been so painfully obvious at the time of the military conversations; and when the Germans refused to join in the deception, he decided that his suspicions of them were justified.

Between Lansdowne and Grey there were, therefore, two great differences. The first was one purely of policy. Lansdowne never took anything for granted, never regarded any feature of his policy as fundamental or unalterable; Grey, on the other hand, put his fear of Germany at the centre of his policy, related everything to it, and thought of nothing else. The second difference was connected with this, but it was one of temperament. Lansdowne never expected too much, either from himself or from others; Grey's outlook was less detached and flexible because he insisted that his policy had the justification of morality as well as self-interest.

But this account of Grey's policy takes us only as far as 1907, and during these two years his policy had been accepted by the

Cabinet for largely fortuitous reasons. There was opposition, but it was inarticulate and divided. The Prime Minister and most of his Radical colleagues were not interested in foreign affairs; Campbell-Bannerman and Ripon had had doubts in the great crisis of January 1906, but they had no clear alternative to offer and did not thereafter attempt to modify Grey's policy. The other Radicals, unaware of the important decisions of that month, took even less interest in foreign affairs, and were content to acquiesce in a policy which eliminated the heavy material cost of maintaining isolation and so allowed high social expenditure at home. More effective opposition came from the Right, from the King and Haldane; but that too was weakened by the King's inability to take a general view of international affairs and by Haldane's antagonism with the Radicals and loyalty to Grey at moments of crisis. But at least Haldane and the King had been successful in arranging their own visits to Germany in 1906 and the Kaiser's return visit in 1907; and there was always the chance that the conditions necessary for Radical acquiescence would cease to operate. There was a very real possibility of a change of policy.

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G.P. *Die grosse Politik der europaïschen Kabinette, 1871–1914.*

A OFFICIAL PAPERS

I PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

(*a*) Foreign Office records:

The following Foreign Office series were used throughout the period (after the beginning of 1906, political correspondence of all countries is brought together, and given the index number F.O. 371).

F.O. France (F.O. 27 to the end of 1905)
Japan (F.O. 46)
Germany (F.O. 64)
Russia (F.O. 65)

Also valuable for selected periods were:

F.O. America (F.O. 5)
China (F.O. 17)
Netherlands (F.O. 37)
Persia (F.O. 60)
Portugal (F.O. 63)
Spain (F.O. 72)
Turkey (F.O. 78—this series includes documents on the Baghdad Railway)
Morocco (F.O. 99)

For subjects not covered by the main series a convenient guide is the *F.O. Confidential Print*, of which there is an almost complete set at the Seeley Historical Library, Cambridge. Particularly valuable were the volumes on South-East Europe, Newfoundland Fisheries, West Africa, Venezuela, Siam, and Central Asia.

(*b*) Cabinet Office records

The records of the Committee of Imperial Defence were not available at the Public Records Office until the spring of 1961, and I am grateful to Mr A. J. D. Woods for allowing me to see them in the Cabinet Office before that date.

(i) Bound volumes. Main series
Cab. 1. Cabinet memoranda
Cab. 2. Minutes of C.I.D.
Cab. 3. C.I.D. Papers on home defence
Cab. 4. C.I.D. Miscellaneous papers
Cab. 5. C.I.D. Papers on colonial defence
Cab. 6. C.I.D. Papers on the defence of India

(ii) Loose documents
Cab. 17/69. Belgium and Holland
Cab. 18/24. Unnumbered C.I.D. Papers, 1905–12

(*c*) War Office and Admiralty records
Adm. 116/866B. Naval staff memoranda, 1889–1912
Adm. 116/940B. Anglo-German relations, 1902–14
W.O. 106/46, W.O. 106/49 } Papers of the Directorate of Military Operations

II ADMIRALTY LIBRARY

A set of volumes of the official memoranda of Lords Selborne, Cawdor, and Tweedmouth as First Lords of the Admiralty. I am grateful to Commander P. K. Kemp for making these available to me.

III FOREIGN OFFICE LIBRARY

A set of Cabinet memoranda issued from the Foreign Office (F.O. General 60). They contain only a few papers not obtainable elsewhere.

B PRIVATE PAPERS

AMPTHILL. India Office Library
Ampthill was Acting Viceroy of India in 1904 and thereafter more in Brodrick's confidence than Curzon was. His papers are mainly of Indian interest but also contain some interesting supplementary materials on problems of Central Asian policy, and especially on Tibet.

ARNOLD-FORSTER. British Museum
This collection contains both official and private papers of Arnold-Forster as Secretary of State for War 1903–5. The private papers include a very frank diary kept by Arnold-Forster from day to day. They deal mainly with military affairs, but there are some interesting references to foreign policy.

ASQUITH. Bodleian Library (by permission of the late Sir Maurice Bonham Carter and Mr Mark Bonham Carter)
There is some important material on the relations between Edward VII and the Liberal Imperialists before the change of government in 1905; but as Chancellor of the Exchequer 1905–8 Asquith took little interest in foreign affairs.

BALFOUR. British Museum
An invaluable collection, hardly used, as regards foreign policy at this period, by Balfour's official biographer. It is, however, a little disappointing on the Moroccan crisis of 1905.

BERTIE. Foreign Office Library
In two series, A and B, the second of which consists mainly of Foreign Office gossip—but is no less interesting for that. These papers are essential for a study of the currents of opinion inside the Foreign Office at the time.

BRYCE. The Bodleian Library
Bryce took little interest in foreign affairs while at the Irish Office 1905–6, and his early papers as Ambassador to Washington after 1907 deal exclusively with American affairs.

JOHN BURNS. British Museum
Nothing of much interest, although the volume most likely to contain material of importance is not yet available.

CAMPBELL-BANNERMAN. British Museum
These papers are interesting and of some importance, but their value is limited by Campbell-Bannerman's comparative lack of interest in foreign affairs.

CARNOCK (Nicolson). Foreign Office Library
Very valuable after 1905. The editors of the official *British Documents* had some access to them, but many of the most interesting letters have not so far been printed.

AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN. Birmingham University Library (by permission of the Librarian)
Extremely interesting for the last years of the Conservative government. Chamberlain kept a large number of official Cabinet memoranda which are essential for an understanding of the British attitude to the Russo-Japanese war.

JOSEPH CHAMBERLAIN. Birmingham University Library (by permission of the Librarian)
Only Joseph Chamberlain's papers as far as the end of 1902 are so far available. On the whole the papers are disappointing, in view of Chamberlain's importance, but they do contain his China memorandum of 1900 (see p. 15), and there is some interesting new material on relations with France at the beginning of the period.

CHILSTON (Akers-Douglas). Kent County Archives, Maidstone (by permission of Lord Chilston)
The collection for the period 1900–5 is apparently not complete and there is nothing on foreign affairs.

CROMER. Public Record Office
Cromer did not keep all the letters he received, and many of the remainder were used in the official biography; but there are one or two letters of interest on the French entente.

CURZON. Viscount Scarsdale, Keldeston Hall, Nr. Derby
Curzon was, especially during the first half of his Viceroyalty, the recipient of numerous confidences from friends inside the Cabinet. His papers are therefore extremely valuable, not only for Indian policy but also for foreign policy as a whole. The letters from Salisbury (pp. 15–18) are, for example, the best statement we have of Salisbury's policy at this time. His biographer, whose preoccupation was of course with Curzon's own life and opinions, hardly made use of this important material.

DEVONSHIRE. Duke of Devonshire, Chatsworth, Derbyshire
A disappointing collection, which contains little or nothing on foreign affairs.

EDWARD VII. Royal Archives, Windsor Castle (by permission of H.M. the Queen)
Edward's papers contain less than might have been expected (some were destroyed after his death). Most useful are the reports of Cabinet meetings: they at least contain a record of the subjects discussed, but with little of help on the course of the discussion and nothing at all on Cabinet divisions.

ESHER. Hon. Lionel Brett, Watlington Park, Watlington, Oxfordshire
This collection (never used for this purpose before) is indispensable for a study of the Anglo-French military conversations. The 'Journals' do not print the letters of greatest interest.

FISHER. Duke of Hamilton, Lennoxlove, Haddington, East Lothian
This collection is not complete, and most of what remains has already been printed by Professor Marder.

HERBERT GLADSTONE. British Museum
Nothing of interest on foreign policy.

GREY. Foreign Office Library
Of immense and unique importance. Although the editors of the official *British Documents* quote from them, they do not include some of the most significant material in the collection.

HALDANE. National Library of Scotland (by permission of Mrs Campbell Fraser)
Indispensable to a study of Liberal foreign policy between 1905 and 1907, for it was Haldane who of all the Cabinet differed most sharply from Grey. Much of the material on this disagreement is still unused.

HAMILTON. India Office Library
An unexpectedly valuable collection. The letters to Curzon from Hamilton while he was Secretary of State for India are the most consistently valuable account we have of the way the Cabinet's mind was working, not only on Indian policy but also on foreign policy in general.

HARDINGE. Cambridge University Library
These papers are interesting for the history of relations with Russia and for studying the climate of opinion inside the Foreign Office, but generally are rather disappointing for this period.

KITCHENER. Public Record Office
Largely military, but with some interesting material on India. Brodrick's reference in 1901 to the possibility of military assistance to Germany (p. 36) comes from this collection.

LANSDOWNE. Foreign Office Library
A collection of immense value, consisting of Lansdowne's private correspondence (in both directions) with heads of missions abroad. A few letters from his colleagues have also crept in. A part of the collection, but only a part, has been used by the official biographer, but what remains is essential to a study of Lansdowne's foreign policy.

LASCELLES. Foreign Office Library
Lascelles was Ambassador at Berlin throughout this period, and his papers, which are very complete and have not been used at all, are correspondingly valuable. They are especially interesting for their evidence on the foreign policy of the King, and of Sanderson, the Permanent Under-Secretary.

MILNER. New College Library (by permission of the College)
Restricted to South African affairs during this period.

MINTO. National Library of Scotland
Of exclusively Indian interest. Unlike Curzon, Minto did not receive confidences from friends inside the Cabinet.

MORLEY. India Office Library
Only Morley's correspondence with the Viceroy is available, but this is extremely interesting. Morley explained his views on the Indian, and also on the larger international situation, at length. They have only been used so far in his own book, *Recollections* (London 1917), and the selection there is tendentious.

RIPON. British Museum
Ripon was one of the Liberal ministers most closely connected with foreign policy, but his correspondence contains disappointingly little that is relevant.

ROBERTS. Public Record Office

Of largely military interest, and apparently not complete after 1902.

ST ALDWYN (Hicks Beach). Earl St Aldwyn, Williamstrip Park, Coln St Aldwyn, Gloucestershire

There are only a few relevant letters in this collection, but they are of some interest.

SALISBURY. Christ Church, Oxford (by permission of the Marquess of Salisbury)

This collection is a very full one, with a valuable and complete collection of Cabinet memoranda as well as of private letters. It has not yet been used systematically.

SATOW. Public Record Office

Satow's papers contain only a few letters of substantial interest for this period, and most of those have already been published in the official *British Documents*.

SPENDER. British Museum

Of no great importance, but contains some interesting background, and correspondence with Grey and Fitzmaurice after the war. That with Grey deals with the writing of his book, *Twenty-five Years*.

SPRING-RICE. Foreign Office Library

The collection for this period is apparently only a fragment of the whole, but it contains one or two interesting letters from Sanderson.

SYDENHAM (Clarke). British Museum (by permission of Mr Roy Mackenzie)

Only a small proportion of Sydenham's papers and of little interest.

TWEEDMOUTH. Admiralty Library

Of little importance, although there is an interesting letter from Asquith on the disagreements inside the Liberal Cabinet over naval policy (see p. 312).

The Midleton, Selborne, Fitzmaurice, and Crewe Papers, the papers of the fourth Marquess of Salisbury, and the remainder of the Lansdowne Papers are not yet available. Nor are those of Lloyd George; but Mrs Elton, Secretary of the Beaverbrook Foundations, has kindly informed me that they contain no reference to foreign or naval policy for this period. The papers of Alfred Lyttelton, Sir J. M. Grierson, Sir John Ottley, and Sir William Robertson (for this period) have probably been destroyed. Inquiries among the families failed to bring to light the papers of Lord Sanderson (a very few of these, of no interest after 1898, are in the Foreign Office Library), Lord Sydenham (but see note above), Earl Percy, Sir Louis Mallet (before 1913), Sir Claude MacDonald (after 1900), Lord Loreburn, or Colonel Repington.

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This list does not claim to include all the books bearing on this subject but only to act as a guide to those mentioned in the text or notes.

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Index

Abdurrahman, 6, 51
Afghanistan, 3-4, 5-6, 51, 90-2, 96-7, 99, 108-9, 111, 115, 118, 138-9, 140, 142, 143, 215-16, 219, 289, 194
Akaba, 296-7
Alaska, 104-5
Algeciras, Conference of, 213, 257-80
Army and Navy Gazette, 175, 179
Arnold-Forster, H. O., 82, 95, 136, 151, 202 n 1, 207, 231-2
Asquith, H. H., 254, 257-8, 259, 260, 281, 284, 289, 292, 309, 312, 315, 323
Austria, 2, 16, 37, 64, 80, 85-7, 117, 137-8, 155-8, 162, 276

Baghdad Railway, 118-23, 197, 222-4, 316, 322-5
Balfour, A. J., 18-19, 58, 63-5, 89-90, 92, 99-103, 113, 116-17, 147-8, 153-4, 170-1, 173-4, 180-1, 189-91, 233
Baltic Fleet, Russian, 172-5, 191-2, 199-201
Belgium, 209-11, 229-30, 246, 249, 252
Bertie, Sir Frank, 19, 26, 47, 53, 63, 65, 99-103, 194, 196, 198, 218, 271, 277-9, 303, 321, 324, 325-6
Brodrick, St John, 36, 136, 141-2, 169-70, 207, 225-6, 231-2

Campbell-Bannerman, Sir Henry, 250-1, 253-6, 258, 260-1, 269-70, 308, 325
Casablanca, 79, 81, 276-9, 327
Cawdor memorandum, 310
Chamberlain, Austen, 135-6, 140, 147, 150, 177, 233
Chamberlain, Joseph, 14-15, 22, 39-40, 59, 62-3, 67-8, 105, 107-8, 122, 124-5, 129-30
China Agreement, Anglo-German (1900), 19-20
Clarke, Sir George, 93-4, 194, 196, 199, 207, 208, 232, 237, 239-47, 252-3
Committee of Imperial Defence, 93-9, 116-17, 143, 151-2, 207-8, 209-11, 219, 232, 239-47, 309
Cranborne, Viscount, *see* Salisbury, fourth Marquess of
Cromer, Earl of, 128, 129, 134, 136-7, 144-5, 157-9
Cronberg, 302-3
Crowe, Sir Eyre, 271, 277-8, 279, 298-9, 313-15
Curzon, Lord, 51-6, 91, 115-16, 141-2, 169-71, 215-16

Delcassé, Théophile, 108, 127-9, 158-9, 184-5, 188-9, 197-9, 202-3, 205, 206, 212
Devonshire, Duke of, 20 n 1, 35, 88-9, 99 n 1
Dogger Bank crisis, *see* North Sea crisis
Dutch East Indies, 195, 208

Eckardstein, Baron von, 22-35 *passim*, 107
Edward VII, 21, 42, 67, 83-4, 88-9, 91, 101-3, 109, 117, 140-1, 152, 153, 160, 164, 173, 224-5, 292, 294, 297-8, 302, 304, 306, 313, 326-9; general assessment, 261-4
Egypt, 127-31, 133, 136-7, 144-5, 158-9
Esher, Lord, 93-4, 205, 239-47, 248-9, 253
expenditure, public, 8-10, 12, 36, 82-3, 110, 147, 167-8

Fisher, Admiral Sir John, 93-4, 173, 176, 189, 190, 206-7, 240-6, 248-9, 275-6, 311, 313, 318
Fitzmaurice, Lord, 272, 289-90, 293, 297, 303, 326
France, military conversations with, 236-56
French entente, negotiations of, 73, 77-80, 107-8, 111-14, 127-31, 132-5, 144-5, 157-9

Garter incident, 88-9
German Navy, 63, 68-9, 82-3, 109-10, 163

Gibraltar, 3, 81, 111, 174, 196, 318, 320
Goschen, G. J., 10, 13, 18-20
Grey, Sir Edward, general assessment, 329-31
Grierson, Sir J. M., 195, 196, 205, 238, 246, 251, 282

Haldane, R. B., 237, 248, 250-1, 257-8, 303-6, 308-9, 328-9
Hamilton, Lord George, 19, 35, 36-7, 62, 87-92, 105, 107, 109, 111, 128-9
Hardinge, Sir Arthur, 52, 53, 56, 88-9
Hardinge, Sir Charles, 100-3, 159-60, 165, 173-4, 183, 217-22, 264-5, 270-4, 277-9, 302-3, 317-18, 326-7
Herbert, Sir Michael, 104-7, 124-5
Hicks Beach, Sir Michael, 8-10, 19, 35, 59, 75-6
Holland, 69, 196, 204, 208-9, 232, 243

Italy, 85-7, 117, 138, 156-8

Japanese Alliance (1902), negotiation of, 47-8, 49, 55-62
Japanese Alliance (1905), renewal of, 180, 182-3, 192-4, 201-2, 205-6, 213-5

Kamranh Bay, 191-2
Khedivial Decree, 100, 159-61
Kiel, 164
Kitchener, Lord, 35
Korea, 57, 58, 61, 62, 147, 150, 181, 213-15, 221

Lansdowne, Marquess of, general assessment of, 233-5
Lascelles, Sir Frank, 22-30, 32-3, 35-8, 68-70, 82, 224-5, 267-8, 315-16
Lee, Arthur, 176
Lister, Reginald, 204, 265, 324
Lloyd George, David, 257, 259, 309, 323
Loreburn, Lord, 254, 255, 259, 297, 309, 312

Macedonia, 87, 117, 137-8, 143, 155-8, 263
Madeira, 195, 226-8, 232
Malay States, 73, 77, 127
Mallet, Sir Louis, 100, 161, 164, 189-90, 191-2, 257, 265, 270, 276, 297-8, 303, 317
Manchuria, 6-7, 17-20, 21-30, 31-2, 33-5, 48-9, 50, 71-2, 125-6, 132, 140, 143, 155, 181, 215
Mediterranean, 1, 65, 74, 84-7, 318-22
Mediterranean Agreements (1887), 2, 86-7
Mediterranean Naval Agreements (1907), 318-22
Menebhi, 40-2
Mercier de Lostende, 245, 252
Military Intelligence Department, 79, 81, 90, 96, 130, 133, 151-2, 195, 205, 230-1, 282
Mogador, 189, 194, 275
Morley, John, 284-7, 290-2, 309
Morocco, 2-3, 22, 38-42, 68, 74-5, 77-81, 111-14, 128-34, 136-7, 144-5, 158-9, 186-235, 266-80
Mürzsteg Punctation, 155-8
Orenburg-Tashkent Railway, 4, 96, 171-2
Ottley, Sir John, 193, 195, 196, 201, 206, 245-7

Percy, Earl, 180
Persia, 4-5, 51-6, 87-90, 96-7, 115, 118, 125-6, 143, 218-20, 283, 285-6, 288-92, 294-5
Portsmouth, Peace of (1905), 215
Portugal, 226-8

Rabat, 81, 145, 266
Repington, Col. Charles à Court, 242-6, 248, 250
Ripon, Marquess of, 253-6, 259, 270, 272, 273
Ritchie, C. T., 58, 110
Roosevelt, President Theodore, 180-2, 184, 187, 206, 212, 214, 215
Rosebery, Earl of, 135, 225, 259, 260
Russian entente (1907), negotiation of, 283-95

Salisbury, third Marquess of, 15-20, 28, 37, 50, 53, 60-1, 66, 75-6, 118, 210 n 3
Salisbury, fourth Marquess of, 65, 126-7, 135, 226
Sanderson, Sir T. H., 19, 27-8, 32, 33, 54, 70, 91, 99-100, 177-8, 210, 218, 220, 232, 250, 252, 270, 314-15
Schleswig-Holstein, 189, 190, 207, 239, 244
Seistan, 53, 56, 90, 97, 118, 123, 143, 289, 292, 294
Selborne, Earl of, 7, 10-11, 12, 49, 59-60, 63, 68-9, 82-3, 109-10, 122, 149-50, 154, 163, 172

Shanghai, evacuation of, 83-4
Siam, 44, 58, 73-4, 77-9, 127, 129-30, 205
South African War, 12-13, 15-16, 35, 62, 69, 75
Spain, 127-34 *passim*, 202-3, 318-22
Straits, Rule of the, 84-5, 92, 116-17, 153-4, 160, 167, 294-5
Stuebel, 32-3

Tangiers, landing at, 186-7
Tibet, 115-16, 118, 125, 140, 143, 160-1, 162, 165-6, 169-71, 219, 287, 289, 294
Tsushima, 199-200
Turkey, 84-5, 117, 137-8, 156, 296-7
Tweedmouth, Lord, 252-3, 254, 275-6, 311-12
Two-Power Standard, 10-11, 163, 311

United States, 10, 11, 66 n 2, 71-2, 77 n 1, 104-7, 124-5, 127, 131, 155, 180-2, 213-14, 223, 286-7

Vanity Fair, 175, 179
Venezuelan crisis, 104-7, 112, 135, 179

William II, Kaiser, 22-4, 42, 67, 164, 224-5, 302, 305, 326-7

Yangtze Valley, 7, 15, 19, 54, 58, 59, 83-4, 107
Younghusband, Sir Francis, 166, 169-71